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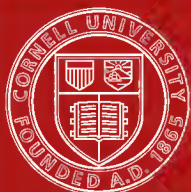
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**LITTLE MEMOIRS OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

**MRS. DELANY**

(Mary Granville)

A MEMOIR : 1700-1788.

*With Seven Illustrations in Photogravure.*

SECOND EDITION.

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**LITTLE MEMOIRS OF THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

*With Seven Illustrations in Photogravure.*

SECOND EDITION.

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LONDON: GRANT RICHARDS  
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON AND CO.





Benjamin Robert Haydon.  
1817.  
a Portrait by Hornlin.

Art. Repro Co.







LITTLE MEMOIRS  
OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY  
GEORGE PASTON

*presented by*  
*E. M. Synnolds*

WITH PORTRAITS IN PHOTOGRAVURE

LONDON  
GRANT RICHARDS  
E. P. DUTTON AND CO.  
NEW YORK

1902

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## PREFACE

*FOR these sketches of minor celebrities of the nineteenth century, it has been my aim to choose subjects whose experiences seem to illustrate the life—more especially the literary and artistic life—of the first half of the century; and who of late years, at any rate, have not been overwhelmed by the attentions of the minor biographer. Having some faith in the theory that the verdict of foreigners is equivalent to that of contemporary posterity, I have included two aliens in the group. A visitor to our shores, whether he be a German princeling like Pückler-Muskau, or a gilded democrat like N. P. Willis, may be expected to observe and comment upon many traits of national life and manners that would escape the notice of a native chronicler.*

*Whereas certain readers of a former volume—‘Little Memoirs of the Eighteenth Century’—seem to have been distressed by the fact that the majority of the characters died in the nineteenth century, it is perhaps meet that I should apologise for the chronology of this present volume, in which all the heroes and heroines, save one, were born in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. But I would venture to submit that a man is not, necessarily, the child of the century in which he is born, or of that in which he dies; rather is he the child of the century which sees the finest flower of his achievement.*



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**BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON**



# BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON

## PART I

IF it be true that the most important ingredient in the composition of the self-biographer is a spirit of childlike vanity, with a blend of unconscious egoism, few men have ever been better equipped than Haydon for the production of a successful autobiography. In naïve simplicity of temperament he has only been surpassed by Pepys, in fulness of self-revelation by Rousseau, and his *Memoirs* are not unworthy of a place in the same category as the *Diary* and the *Confessions*. From the larger public, the work has hardly attracted the attention it deserves; it is too long, too minute, too heavily weighted with technical details and statements of financial embarrassments, to be widely or permanently popular. But as a human document, and as the portrait of a temperament, its value can hardly be overestimated; while as a tragedy it is none the less tragic because it contains elements of the grotesque. Haydon set out with the laudable intention of writing the exact truth about himself and his career, holding that every man who has suffered for a principle, and who has been unjustly persecuted and oppressed, should write his own history, and set his own case before his countrymen. It is a fortunate accident for his readers that he should have been gifted with the faculty of picturesque expression and an exceptionally keen power

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of observation. If not a scholar, he was a man of wide reading, of deep though desultory thinking, and a good critic where the work of others was concerned. He seems to have desired to conceal nothing, nor to set down aught in malice; if he fell into mistakes and misrepresentations, these were the result of unconscious prejudice, and the exaggerative tendency of a brain that, if not actually warped, trembled on the border-line of sanity. He hoped that his mistakes would be a warning to others, his successes a stimulus, and that the faithful record of his struggles and aspirations would clear his memory from the aspersions that his enemies had cast upon it.

Haydon was born at Plymouth on January 26, 1786. He was the lineal descendant of an ancient Devonshire family, the Haydons of Cadhay, who had been ruined by a Chancery suit a couple of generations earlier, and had consequently taken a step downwards in the social scale. His grandfather, who married Mary Baskerville, a descendant of the famous printer, set up as a bookseller in Plymouth, and, dying in 1773, bequeathed his business to his son Benjamin, the father of our hero. This Benjamin, who married the daughter of a Devonshire clergyman named Copley, was a man of the old-fashioned, John Bull type, who loved his Church and king, believed that England was the only great country in the world, swore that Napoleon won all his battles by bribery, and would have knocked down any man who dared to disagree with him. The childhood of the future historical painter was a picturesque and stirring period, filled with the echoes of revolution and the rumours of wars. The Sound was crowded with fighting ships preparing for sea, or returning battered and blackened, with wounded soldiers on board and captured vessels in tow. Plymouth

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itself was full of French prisoners, who made little models of guillotines out of their meat-bones, and sold them to the children for the then fashionable amusement of 'cutting off Louis XVI.'s head.'

Benjamin was sent to the local grammar-school, whose headmaster, Dr. Bidlake, was a man of some culture, though not a deep classic. He wrote poetry, encouraged his pupils to draw, and took them for country excursions, with a view to fostering their love of nature. Mr. Haydon, though he was proud of Benjamin's early attempts at drawing, had no desire that he should be turned into an artist, and becoming alarmed at Dr. Bidlake's dilettante methods, he transferred his son to the Plympton Grammar-school, where Sir Joshua Reynolds had been educated, with strict injunctions to the headmaster that the boy was on no account to have drawing-lessons. On leaving school at sixteen, Benjamin, after, a few months with a firm of accountants at Exeter, was bound apprentice to his father for seven years, and it was then that his troubles began.

'I hated day-books, ledgers, bill-books, and cash-books,' he tells us. 'I hated standing behind the counter, and insulted the customers; I hated the town and all the people in it.' At last, after a quarrel with a customer who tried to drive a bargain, this proud spirit refused to enter the shop again. In vain his father pointed out to him the folly of letting a good business go to ruin, of refusing a comfortable independence—all argument was vain. An illness, which resulted in inflammation of the eyes, put a stop to the controversy for the time being; but on recovery, with his sight permanently injured, the boy still refused to work out his articles, but wandered about the town in search of casts and books on art. He

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bought a fine copy of Albinus at his father's expense, and in a fortnight, with his sister to aid, learnt all the muscles of the body, their rise and insertion, by heart. He stumbled accidentally on Reynold's *Discourses*, and the first that he read placed so much reliance on honest industry, and expressed so strong a conviction that all men are equal in talent, and that application makes all the difference, that the would-be artist, who hitherto had been held back by some distrust of his natural powers, felt that at last his destiny was irrevocably fixed. He announced his intention of adopting an art-career with a determination that demolished all argument, and, in spite of remonstrances, reproaches, tears, and scoldings, he wrung from his father permission to go to London, and the promise of support for the next two years.

On May 14, 1804, at the age of eighteen, young Haydon took his place in the mail, and made his first flight into the world. Arriving at the lodgings that had been taken for him in the Strand in the early morning, he had no sooner breakfasted than he set off for Somerset House, to see the Royal Academy Exhibition. Looking round for historical pictures, he discovered that Opie's 'Gil Blas' was the centre of attraction in one room, and Westall's 'Shipwrecked Boy' in another.

'I don't fear you,' he said to himself as he strode away. His next step was to inquire for a plaster-shop, where he bought the Laocoön and other casts, and then, having unpacked his Albinus, he was hard at work before nine next morning drawing from the round, and breathing aspirations for High Art, and defiance to all opposition. 'For three months,' he tells us, 'I saw nothing but my books, my casts, and my drawings. My enthusiasm was immense, my devotion for study that of

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a martyr. I rose when I woke, at three or four, drew at anatomy till eight, in chalks from casts from nine till one, and from half-past two till five—then walked, dined, and to anatomy again from seven till ten or eleven. I was resolute to be a great painter, to honour my country, and to rescue the Art from that stigma of incapacity that was impressed upon it.'

After some months of solitary study, Haydon be-thought him of a letter of introduction that had been given him to Prince Hoare, who was something of a critic, having himself failed as an artist. Hoare good-naturedly encouraged the youth in his ambitions, and gave him introductions to Northcote, Opie, and Fuseli.

To Northcote, who was a Plymouth man, Haydon went first, and he gives a curious account of his interview with his distinguished fellow-countryman, who also had once cherished aspirations after high art. Northcote, a little wizened old man, with a broad Devonshire accent, exclaimed on hearing that his young visitor intended to be a historical painter: 'Heestorical painter! why, ye'll starve with a bundle of straw under yeer head.' As for anatomy, he declared that it was no use. 'Sir Joshua didn't know it; why should you want to know what he didn't? Michael Angelo! What's he to do here? You must paint portraits here.' 'I won't,' said young Haydon, clenching his teeth, and he marched off to Opie. He found a coarse-looking, intellectual man who, after reading the introductory letter, said quietly, 'You are studying anatomy—master it—were I your age, I would do the same.' The last visit was to Fuseli, who had a great reputation for the terrible, both as artist and as man. The gallery into which the visitor was ushered

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was so full of devils, witches, ghosts, blood and thunder, that it was a palpable relief when nothing more alarming appeared than a little old and lion-faced man, attired in a flannel dressing-gown, with the bottom of Mrs. Fuseli's work-basket on his head! Fuseli, who had just been appointed Keeper of Academy, received the young man kindly, praised his drawings, and expressed a hope that he would see him at the Academy School.

After the Christmas vacation of 1805, Haydon began to attend the Academy classes, where he struck up a close friendship with John Jackson, afterwards a popular portrait-painter and Royal Academician, but then a student like himself. Jackson was the son of a village tailor in Yorkshire, and the *protégé* of Lord Mulgrave and Sir George Beaumont. The two friends told each other their plans for the future, drew together in the evenings, and made their first life-studies from a friendly coalheaver whom they persuaded to sit to them. After a few months of hard work, Haydon was summoned home to take leave of his father, who was believed to be dying. The invalid recovered, and then followed another period of torture for the young student—aunts, uncles, and cousins all trying to drive the stray sheep back into the commercial fold. Exhausted by the struggle, Haydon at last consented to relinquish his career, and enter the business. Great was his delight and surprise when his father refused to accept the sacrifice—which was made in anything but a cheerful spirit—and promised to contribute to his support until he was able to provide for himself.

In the midst of all these domestic convulsions came a letter from Jackson, containing the announcement that there was 'a raw, tall, pale, queer Scotchman just come up, an odd fellow, but with something in him. He is



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called Wilkie.' 'Hang the fellow !' said Haydon to himself. 'I hope with his "something" he is not going to be a historical painter.' On his return to town, our hero made the acquaintance of the queer young Scotchman, and was soon admitted to his friendship and intimacy. Wilkie's 'Village Politicians' was the sensation of the Exhibition of 1806, and brought him two important commissions—one from Lord Mulgrave for the 'Blind Fiddler,' and the other from Sir George Beaumont for the 'Rent-Day.' It was now considered that Wilkie's fortune was made, his fame secure, and if his two chief friends—Haydon and Jackson—could not help regarding him with some natural feelings of envy, it is evident that his early success encouraged them, and stimulated them to increased effort.

Haydon had been learning fresh secrets in his art, partly from an anatomical 'subject' that he had obtained from a surgeon, and partly from his introduction, through the good offices of Jackson, to the works of Titian at Stafford House, and in other private collections, there being as yet no National Gallery where the student could study the old masters at his pleasure. Haydon was now panting to begin his first picture, his natural self-confidence having been strengthened by a letter from Wilkie, who reported that Lord Mulgrave, with whom he was staying, was much interested in what he had heard of Haydon's ambitions. Lord Mulgrave had suggested a heroic subject—the Death of Dentatus—which he would like to see painted, and he wished to know if this commended itself to Haydon's ideas. This first commission for a great historical picture—for so he understood the suggestion—was a triumph for the young artist, who felt himself gloriously rewarded for two years of labour

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and opposition. He had, however, already decided on the subject of his first attempt—Joseph and Mary resting on the road to Egypt. On October 1, 1806, after setting his palette, and taking his brush in hand, he knelt down, in accordance with his invariable custom throughout his career, and prayed fervently that God would bless his work, grant him energy to create a new era in art, and rouse the people to a just estimate of the moral value of historical painting.

Then followed a happy time. The difficulties of a first attempt were increased by his lack of systematic training, but Haydon believed, with Sir Joshua, that application made the artist, and he certainly spared no pains to achieve success. He painted and repainted his heads a dozen times, and used to mix tints on a piece of paper, and carry them down to Stafford House once a week in order to compare them with the colouring of the Titians. While this work was in progress, Sir George and Lady Beaumont called to see the picture, which they declared was very poetical, and ‘quite large enough for anything’ (the canvas was six feet by four), and invited the artist to dinner. This first dinner-party, in what he regarded as ‘high life,’ was an alarming ordeal for the country youth, who made prodigious preparations, drove to the house in a state of abject terror, and in five minutes was sitting on an ottoman, talking to Lady Beaumont, and more at ease than he had ever been in his life. In truth, bashfulness was never one of Haydon’s foibles.

The Joseph and Mary took six months to paint, and was exhibited in 1807. It was considered a remarkable work for a young student, and was bought the following year by Mr. Hope of Deepdene. During the season, Haydon was introduced to Lord Mulgrave, and with his

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friends Wilkie and Jackson frequently dined at the Admiralty,<sup>1</sup> where they met ministers, generals, great ladies and men of genius, and rose daily in hope and promise. Haydon now began the picture of the 'Death of Siccus Dentatus' that his patron had suggested, but he found the difficulties so overwhelming that, by Wilkie's advice, he decided to go down to Plymouth for a few months, and practise portrait-painting. At fifteen guineas a head, he got plenty of employment among his friends and relations, though he owns that his portraits were execrable; but as soon as he had obtained some facility in painting heads, he was anxious to return to town to finish his large picture. Mrs. Haydon was now in declining health, and desiring to consult a famous surgeon in London, she decided to travel thither with her son and daughter. Unfortunately her disease, *angina pectoris*, was aggravated by the agitation of the journey, and on the road, at Salt Hill, she was seized with an attack that proved fatal. Haydon was obliged to return to Devonshire with his sister, but as soon as the funeral was over he set off again for town, where his prospects seemed to justify his exchanging his garret in the Strand for a first floor in Great Marlborough Street.

He found the practice gained in portrait-painting a substantial advantage, but he still felt himself incapable of composing a heroic figure for Dentatus. 'If I copied nature my work was mean,' he complains; 'and if I left her it was mannered. How was I to build a heroic form like life, yet above life?' He was puzzled to find, in painting from the living model, that the markings of the skin varied with the action of the limbs, variations that

<sup>1</sup> Lord Mulgrave had recently been appointed First Lord of the Admiralty.

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did not appear in the few specimens of the antique that had come under his notice. Was nature wrong, he asked himself, or the antique? During this period of indecision and confusion came a proposal from Wilkie that they should go together to inspect the Elgin Marbles then newly arrived in England, and deposited at Lord Elgin's house in Park Lane. Haydon carelessly agreed, knowing nothing of the wonders he was to see, and the two friends proceeded to Park Lane, where they were ushered through a yard to a dirty shed, in which lay the world-famous Marbles.

'The first thing I fixed my eyes on,' to quote Haydon's own words, 'was the wrist of a figure in one of the female groups, in which were visible the radius and ulna. I was astonished, for I had never seen them hinted at in any wrist in the antique. I darted my eye to the elbow, and saw the outer condyle visibly affecting the shape, as in nature. That combination of nature and repose which I had felt was so much wanting for high art was here displayed to midday conviction. My heart beat. If I had seen nothing else, I had beheld sufficient to help me to nature for the rest of my life. But when I turned to the Theseus, and saw that every form was altered by action or repose—when I saw that the two sides of his back varied as he rested on his elbow; and again, when in the figure of the fighting metope, I saw the muscle shown under one armpit in that instantaneous action of darting out, and left out in the other armpits; when I saw, in short, the most heroic style of art, combined with all the essential detail of everyday life, the thing was done at once and for ever. . . . Here were the principles which the great Greeks in their finest time established, and here was I, the most prominent historical student,

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perfectly qualified to appreciate all this by my own determined mode of study.'

On returning to his painting-room, Haydon, feeling utterly disgusted with his attempt at the heroic in the form and action of Dentatus, obliterated what he calls 'the abominable mass,' and breathed as if relieved of a nuisance. Through Lord Mulgrave he obtained an order to draw from the Marbles, and devoted the next three months to mastering their secrets, and bringing his hand and mind into subjection to the principles that they displayed. 'I rose with the sun,' he writes, with the glow of his first enthusiasm still upon him, 'and opened my eyes to the light only to be conscious of my high pursuit. I sprang from my bed, dressed like one possessed, and passed the day, noon, and the night, in the same dream of abstracted enthusiasm; secluded from the world, regardless of its feelings, impregnable to disease, insensible to contempt.' He painted his heads, figures, and draperies over and over again, feeling that to obliterate was the only way to improve. His studio soon filled with fashionable folk, who came to see the 'extraordinary picture painted by a young man who had never had the advantages of foreign travel.' Haydon believed, with the simplicity of a child, in all these flattering prophecies of glory and fame, and imagined that the Academy would welcome with open arms so promising a student, one, moreover, who had been trained in its own school. He redoubled his efforts, and in March 1809, 'Dentatus' was finished.

'The production of this picture,' he naïvely explains, 'must and will be considered as an epoch in English art. The drawing in it was correct and elevated, and the perfect forms and system of the antique were carried into painting, united with the fleshy look of everyday life.

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The colour, light and shadow, the composition and the telling of the story were complete.' His contemporaries did not form quite so flattering an estimate of the work. It was badly hung, a fate to which many an artist of three-and-twenty has had to submit, before and since; but Haydon writes as if no such injustice had been committed since the world began, and was persuaded that the whole body of Academicians was leagued in spite and jealousy against him. Lord Mulgrave gave him sixty guineas in addition to the hundred he had first promised, which seems a fair price for the second work of an obscure artist, but poor Haydon fancied that his professional prospects had suffered from the treatment of the Academy, that people of fashion (on whose attentions he set great store) were neglecting him, and that he was a marked man. A sea-trip to Plymouth with Wilkie gave his thoughts a new and more healthy turn. Together, the friends visited Sir Joshua's birthplace, and roamed over the moors and combes of Devonshire. Before returning to town, they spent a delightful fortnight with Sir George Beaumont at Coleorton, where, says Haydon, 'we dined with the Claude and Rembrandt before us, and breakfasted with the Rubens landscape, and did nothing, morning, noon, and night, but think of painting, talk of painting, and wake to paint again.'

During this visit, Sir George gave Haydon a commission for a picture on a subject from *Macbeth*. After it was begun, he objected to the size, but our artist, who, throughout his life, detested painting cabinet pictures, refused to attempt anything on a smaller scale. He persuaded Sir George to withhold his decision until the picture was finished, and promised that if he still objected to the size, he would paint him another on any scale he

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pleased. While engaged on 'Macbeth,' he competed with 'Dentatus' for a hundred guinea prize offered by the Directors of the British Gallery for the best historical picture. 'Dentatus' won the prize, but this piece of good fortune was counterbalanced by a letter from Mr. Haydon, senior, containing the announcement that he could no longer afford to maintain his son. This was a heavy blow, but after turning over pros and cons in his own mind, Haydon came to the conclusion that since he had won the hundred guinea prize, he had a good chance of winning a three hundred guinea prize, which the Directors now offered, with his 'Macbeth,' and consequently that he had no occasion to dread starvation. 'Thus reasoning,' he says, 'I borrowed, and praying God to bless my emotions, went on more vigorously than ever. *And here began debt and obligation, out of which I have never been, and shall never be, extricated, as long as I live.*'

This prophecy proved only too true. But Haydon, though he afterwards bitterly regretted his folly in exchanging independence for debt, and his pride in refusing to paint pot-boilers in the intervals of his great works, firmly believed that he, with his high aims and fervent desire to serve the cause of art, was justified in continuing his ambitious course, and depending for maintenance on the contributions of his friends. Nothing could exceed the approbation of his own conduct, or shake his faith in his own powers. 'I was a virtuous and diligent youth,' he assures us; 'I never touched wine, dined at reasonable chop-houses, lived principally in my study, and cleaned my own brushes, like the humblest student.' He goes to see Sebastian del Piombo's 'Lazarus' in the Angerstein collection, and, after writing a careful criticism of the work, concludes: 'It is a grand

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picture; a great acquisition to the country, and an honour to Mr. Angerstein's taste and spirit in buying it; yet if God cut not my life permanently short, I hope I shall leave one behind me that will do more honour to my country than this has done to Rome. In short, if I live, I will—I feel I shall. (God pardon me if this is presumption. June 21, 1810.)'

At this time Haydon devoted a good deal of his leisure to reading classic authors, Homer, Æschylus, and Virgil, in order to tune his mind to high thoughts. Nearly every day he spent a few hours in drawing from the Elgin Marbles, and he piously thanks God that he was in existence on their arrival. He spared no pains to ensure that his 'Macbeth' should be perfect in poetry, expression, form and colour, making casts and studies without end. His friends related, as a wonderful specimen of his conscientiousness, that, after having completed the figure of Macbeth, he took it out in order to raise it higher in the picture, believing that this would improve the effect. 'The wonder in ancient Athens would have been if I had suffered him to remain,' he observes. 'Such is the state of art in this country!'

In 1811 Haydon entered into his first journalistic controversy, an unfortunate departure, as it turned out, since it gave him a taste for airing his ideas in print. Leigh Hunt, to whom he had been introduced a year or two before, had attacked one of his theories, relative to a standard figure, in the *Examiner*. Haydon replied, was replied to himself, and thoroughly enjoyed the controversy which, he says, consolidated his powers of verbal expression. Leigh Hunt he describes as a fine specimen of a London editor, with his bushy hair, black eyes, pale face, and 'nose of taste.' He was assuming



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yet moderate, sarcastic yet genial, with a smattering of everything and mastery of nothing ; affecting the dictator, the poet, the politician, the critic, and the sceptic, whichever would, at the moment, give him the air, to inferior minds, of a very superior man.' Although Haydon disliked Hunt's 'Cockney peculiarities,' and disapproved of his republican principles, yet the fearless honesty of his opinions, the unhesitating sacrifice of his own interests, the unselfish perseverance of his attacks upon all abuses, whether royal or religious, noble or democratic, made a deep impression on the young artist's mind.

Towards the end of 1811 the new picture, which represents Macbeth stepping between the sleeping grooms to murder the king, was finished, and sent to the British Gallery. It was well hung, and was praised by the critics, but Sir George declined to take it, though he offered to pay Haydon a hundred pounds for his trouble, or to give him a commission for a picture on a smaller scale. Haydon petulantly refused both offers, and thus after three years' work, and incurring debts to the amount of six hundred pounds, he found himself penniless, with his picture returned on his hands. This disappointment was only the natural result of his own impracticable temperament, but to Haydon's exaggerative sense the whole world seemed joined in a conspiracy against him. 'Exasperated by the neglect of my family,' he writes, 'tormented by the consciousness of debt, cut to the heart by the cruelty of Sir George, and enraged at the insults of the Academy, I became furious.' His fury, unfortunately, found vent in an attack upon the Academy and its methods, through the medium of the *Examiner*, which was the recognised

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vehicle of all attacks upon authority. The onslaught seems to have been justified, though whether it was judicious is another question. The ideals of English artists during the early years of the nineteenth century had sunk very low, and the standard of public taste was several degrees lower. Portrait-painting was the only lucrative branch of art, and the Academy was almost entirely in the hands of the portrait-painters, who gave little encouragement to works of imagination. The burden of the patron, which had been removed from literature, still rested upon painting, and the Academicians found it more to their interest to foster the ignorance than to educate the taste of the patron.

Over the signature of 'An English Student,' Haydon not only exposed the inefficiency of the Academy, but advocated numerous reforms, chief among them being an improved method of election, the establishment of schools of design, a reduction in the power of the Council, and an annual grant of public money for purposes of art. In these days, when the Academicians are no longer regarded as a sacred body, it is hard to realise the commotion that these letters made in art circles, whether professional or amateur. The identity of the 'English Student' was soon discovered, and 'from that moment,' writes Haydon, 'the destiny of my life was changed. My picture was caricatured, my name detested, my peace harassed. I was looked at like a monster, abused like a plague, and avoided like a maniac.' There is probably some characteristic exaggeration in this statement, but considering the power wielded at this time by the Academy and its supporters, Haydon would undoubtedly have done better, from a worldly point of view, to keep clear of these controversies. The prudent and sensible

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Wilkie was much distressed at his friend's ebullition of temper, and earnestly advised him to follow up the reputation his brush had gained for him, and leave the pen alone. 'In moments of depression,' wrote Haydon, many years later, 'I often wished I had followed Wilkie's advice, but then I should never have acquired that grand and isolated reputation, solitary and unsupported, which, while it encumbers the individual, inspires him with vigour proportioned to the load.'

On April 3, 1812, Haydon records in his journal: 'My canvas came home for Solomon, twelve feet ten inches by ten feet ten inches—a grand size. God in heaven, grant me strength of body and vigour of mind to cover it with excellence. Amen—on my knees.' His design was to paint a series of great ideal works, that should stand comparison with the productions of the old masters, and he had chosen the somewhat stereotyped subject of the Judgment of Solomon, because Raphael and Rubens had both tried it, and he intended to tell the story better! He was now, at the beginning of this ambitious project, entirely without means. His father had died, and left him nothing, and his 'Macbeth' had not won the £300 premium at the British Gallery. His aristocratic friends had temporarily deserted him, but the Hunts assisted him with the ready liberality of the impecunious. John lent him small sums of money, while Leigh offered him a plate at his table till Solomon was finished, and initiated him into the mysteries of drawing and discounting bills.

Haydon already owed his landlord two hundred pounds, but that seemed to him no reason for moving into cheaper rooms. He called the man up, and represented

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to him that he was about to paint a great masterpiece, which would take him two years, during which period he would earn nothing, and be unable to pay any rent. The landlord, surely a unique specimen of his order, deliberated rather ruefully over the prospect set before him, rubbed his chin, and muttered: 'I should not like ye to go—it's hard for both of us; but what I say is, you always paid me when you could, and why should you not again when you are able? . . . Well, sir, here's my hand; I'll give you two years more, and if this does not sell—why then, sir, we'll consider what is to be done.'

Thus a roof was provided, but there was still dinner to be thought of, since, if a man works, he must also eat. 'I went to the house [John o' Groat's] where I had always dined,' writes Haydon, 'intending to dine without paying for that day. I thought the servants did not offer me the same attention. I thought I perceived the company examine me—I thought the meat was worse. My heart sank, as I said falteringly, "I will pay you to-morrow." The girl smiled, and seemed interested. As I was escaping with a sort of lurking horror, she said, "Mr. Haydon, my master wishes to see you." "My God," thought I, "it is to tell me he can't trust!" In I walked like a culprit. "Sir, I beg your pardon, but I see by the papers you have been ill-used; I hope you won't be angry—I mean no offence; but I just wish to say, as you have dined here many years and always paid, if it would be a convenience during your present work to dine here till it is done—so that you may not be obliged to spend your money here when you may want it—I was going to say that you need be under no apprehension—hem! for a dinner.'" This handsome offer was

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condescendingly accepted, and the good man seemed quite relieved.

While Solomon was slowly progressing at the expense of the landlord and the eating-house keeper, Haydon spent his leisure in literary rather than artistic circles. At Leigh Hunt's he met, and became intimate with Charles Lamb, Keats, Hazlitt, and John Scott. In January 1813 he writes: 'Spent the evening with Leigh Hunt at West End. His society is always delightful. I do not know a purer, more virtuous partner, or a more witty and enlivening man. We talked of his approaching imprisonment. He said it would be a great pleasure if he were certain to be sent to Newgate, because he should be in the midst of his friends.' Hazlitt won our hero's liking by praising his 'Macbeth.' 'Thence began a friendship,' Haydon tells us, 'for that interesting man, that singular mixture of friend and fiend, radical and critic, metaphysician, poet, and painter, on whose word no one could rely, on whose heart no one could calculate, and some of whose deductions he himself would try to explain in vain. . . . Mortified at his own failure [in painting] he resolved that as he had not succeeded, no one else should, and he spent the whole of his after-life in damping the ardour, chilling the hopes, and dimming the prospects of patrons and painters, so that after I once admitted him, I had nothing but forebodings of failure to bear up against, croakings about the climate, and sneers at the taste of the public.'

By the beginning of 1814 Solomon was approaching completion, but the artist had been reduced to living for a fortnight on potatoes. He had now been nearly four years without a commission, and three without any help from home, so that it is not surprising to learn that he

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felt completely broken down in body and mind, or that his debts amounted to £1100. A frame was procured on credit, and, failing any more suitable place of exhibition, the picture was sent to the Water-colour Society. At the private view, the Princess of Wales and other eminent critics pronounced against the Solomon, but as soon as the public were admitted, the tune changed, and John Bull vowed it was the finest work of art ever produced in England. If posterity has not indorsed this judgment, the Solomon is at least regarded, by competent critics, as Haydon's most successful work. 'Before the doors had been open half an hour,' writes Haydon, 'a gentleman opened his pocket-book, and showed me a £500 note. "Will you take it?" My heart beat—my agonies of want pressed, but it was too little. I trembled out, "I cannot." The gentleman invited me to dine, and when we were sitting over our wine, agreed to give me my price. His lady said, "But, my dear, where am I to put my piano?" and the bargain was at an end!' On the third day Sir George Beaumont and Mr. Holwell Carr came to the Exhibition, having been deputed to buy the picture for the British Gallery. While they were discussing its merits, one of the officials went over, and put 'sold' on the frame, whereupon the artist says he thought he should have fainted. The work had been bought at the price asked, £700, by two Plymouth bankers, Sir William Elford (the friend and correspondent of Miss Mitford) and Mr. Tingecombe.

Poor Haydon now thought that his fortune was secure. He paid away £500 to landlord and tradesmen in the first week, and though this did not settle half his debts, it restored his credit. The balance was spent in a trip

to Paris with Wilkie, Paris being then (May 1814) the most interesting place on earth. All the nations of Europe were gathered together there, and the Louvre was in its glory. So absorbed and fascinated was Haydon by the actual life of the city, that he finds little to say about the works of art there collected. Yet his first visit was to the Louvre, and he describes with what impetuosity he bounded up the steps, three at a time, and how he scolded Wilkie for trotting up with his usual deliberation. 'I might just as well have scolded the column,' he observes. 'I soon left him at some Jan Steen, while I never stopped until I stood before the "Transfiguration." My first feeling was disappointment. It looked small, harsh and hard. This, of course, is always the way when you have fed your imagination for years on a work you know only by prints. Even the "Pietro Martyre" was smaller than I thought to find it; yet after the difference between reality and anticipation had worn away, these great works amply repaid the study of them, and grew up to the fancy, or rather the fancy grew up to them. . . . It will hardly be believed by artists that we often forgot the great works in the Louvre in the scenes around us, and found Russians and Bashkirs from Tartary more attractive than the "Transfiguration"; but so it was, and I do not think we were very wrong either. Why stay poring over pictures when we were on the most remarkable scene in the history of the earth.'

On his return to London, Haydon was gratified by the news that his friend and fellow-townsmen, George Eastlake, had proposed and carried a motion that he should be presented with the freedom of his native city, as a testimony of respect for his extraordinary merit

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as a historical painter. Furthermore, the Directors of the British Gallery sent him a hundred guineas as a token of their admiration for his latest work. But no commission followed, either from a private patron or public body. However, the artist, nothing daunted, ordered a larger canvas, and set vigorously to work on a representation of 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem,' a picture which occupied him, with intervals of illness and idleness, for nearly six years.

The year 1815 was too full of stir and excitement for a man like Haydon, who was always keenly interested in public affairs, to devote himself to steady work. The news of Waterloo almost turned his brain. On June 23 he notes: 'I read the *Gazette* [with the account of Waterloo] the last thing before going to bed. I dreamt of it, and was fighting all night; I got up in a steam of feeling, and read the *Gazette* again, ordered a *Courier* for a month, and read all the papers till I was faint. . . . 'Have not the efforts of the nation,' I asked myself, 'been gigantic?' To such glories she only wants to add the glories of my noble art to make her the grandest nation in the world, and these she shall have if God spare my life. . . .

'*June 25.*—Dined with Hunt. I give myself credit for not worrying him to death at this news. He was quiet for some time, but knowing it must come, and putting on an air of indifference, he said, "Terrible battle this, Haydon." "A glorious one, Hunt." "Oh yes, certainly," and to it we went. Yet Hunt took a just and liberal view of the situation. As for Hazlitt, it is not to be believed how the destruction of Napoleon affected him; he seemed prostrated in mind and body; he walked about unwashed, unshaved, hardly sober by day, and



always intoxicated by night, literally, without exaggeration, for weeks, until at length, wakening as it were from his stupor, he at once left off all stimulating liquors, and never touched them after.'

It is in this year that we find the first mention in the *Journal of Wordsworth*, who, throughout his life, was one of Haydon's most faithful friends and appreciative admirers. On April 13, the artist records: 'I had a cast made yesterday of Wordsworth's face. He bore it like a philosopher. . . . We afterwards called on Hunt, and as Hunt had previously attacked him, and now has reformed his opinions, the meeting was interesting. Hunt paid him the highest compliments, and told him that as he grew wiser and got older, he found his respect for his powers, and enthusiasm for his genius, increase. . . . I afterwards sauntered with him to Hampstead, with great delight. Never did any man so beguile the time as Wordsworth. His purity of heart, his kindness, his soundness of principle, his information, his knowledge, and the intense and eager feelings with which he pours forth all he knows, affect, interest, and enchant one. I do not know any one I would be so inclined to worship as a purified being.'

The new picture was not far advanced before the painter was once again at the end of his resources, though not of his courage. Fifty guineas were advanced to him by Sir George Beaumont, who had now commissioned a picture at two hundred guineas, and Mr. (after Sir George) Phillips, of Manchester, gave him a commission of £500 for a sacred work, paying one hundred guineas down. But these advances melted rapidly away in the expenses attendant on the painting of so ambitious a work as the 'Entry into Jerusalem.'

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Towards the close of the year Haydon's health began to suffer from his excessive application, his sight weakened, and he was often unable to paint for months at a time. Under these afflictions, he was consoled by receiving permission to take casts of the Elgin Marbles, the authenticity of which treasures had recently been attacked by the art-critic, Knight Payne, who declared that they were not Greek at all, but Roman, of the time of Hadrian. Such was the effect of Payne Knight's opinion that the Marbles went down in the public estimation, the Government hesitated to buy them for the nation, and they were left neglected in a damp shed. Haydon was furious at this insult to the objects of his idolatry, whose merits he had been preaching in season and out of season since the day that he first set eyes upon the Theseus and the Ilissus. At this critical moment he found himself supported by a new and powerful champion in the person of Canova, who had just arrived in England. Canova at once admitted that the style of the Marbles was superior to that of all other known marbles, and declared that they were well worth coming from Rome to see. 'Canova's visit was a victory for me,' writes Haydon, who had received the sculptor at his studio, and introduced him to some of the artistic lions of London. 'What became now of all the sneers at my senseless insanity about the Marbles? I, unknown, with no station or rank, might have talked myself dumb; but for Canova, the great artist of Europe, to repeat word for word what I had been saying for seven years! His opinion could not be gainsaid.'

If our troubles are apt to come not in single file, but in 'whole battalions,' our triumphs also occasionally arrive in squadrons, or such at least was Haydon's ex-

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perience. Hard upon Canova's departure came a letter from Wordsworth, enclosing three sonnets, the last of which had, he avowed, been inspired by a letter of Haydon's on the struggles and hardships of the artist's life. This is now the familiar sonnet beginning, 'High is our calling, Friend,' and concluding:

'Great is the glory, for the strife is hard.'

'Now, reader,' writes the delighted recipient, 'was not this glorious? And you, young student, when you are pressed down by want in the midst of a great work, remember what followed Haydon's perseverance. The freedom of his native town, the visit of Canova, and the sonnet of Wordsworth, and if that do not cheer you up, and make you go on, you are past all hope. . . . It had, indeed, been a wonderful year for me. The Academicians were silenced. All classes were so enthusiastic and so delighted that, though I had lost seven months with weak eyes, and had only accomplished *The Penitent Girl*, *The Mother*, *The Centurion* and the *Samaritan Woman*, yet they were considered so decidedly in advance of all I had yet done, that my painting-room was crowd by rank, beauty, and fashion, and the picture was literally taken up as an honour to the nation.'

But, alas! neither the sonnets of poets nor the homage of the great would pay for models and colours, or put bread into the artist's mouth. Haydon could only live by renewed borrowing, for which method of support he endeavours, without much success, to excuse himself. Once in the clutches of professional money-lenders, he confesses that 'the fine edge of honour was dulled. Though my honourable discharge of what I borrowed justified my borrowing again, yet it is a fallacious relief,

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because you must stop sooner or later; if you are punctual, and if you can pay in the long-run, why incur the debt at all? Too proud to do small, modest things, that I might obtain fair means of subsistence as I proceeded with my great work, I thought it no degradation to borrow, to risk the insult of refusal, and be bated down like the meanest dealer. Then I was liberal in my art; I spared no expense for casts and prints, and did great things for the art by means of them. . . . Ought I, after such efforts as I had made, to have been left in this position by the Directors of the British Gallery or the Government?’

The year 1816 was distinguished in Haydon's life as the epoch of his first, or, more accurately, his last serious love-affair. He was of a susceptible temperament, and seems to have been a favourite with women, whom he inspired with his own strong belief in himself; but he demanded much of the woman who was to be his wife, and hitherto he had not found one who seemed worthy of that exalted position. He had long been acquainted with Maria Foote, the actress, for whom he entertained a qualified admiration, and by her he was taken one day to a friend's house where, ‘In one instant, the loveliest face that was ever created since God made Eve, smiled gently at my approach. The effect of her beauty was instantaneous. On the sofa lay a dying man and a boy about two years old. We shortly took leave. I never spoke a word, and after seeing M—— home, I returned to the house, and stood outside, in hopes that she would appear at the window. I went home, and for the first time in my life was really, heartily, thoroughly, passionately in love. I hated my pictures. I hated the Elgin Marbles. I hated books. I could not eat, or sleep, or

think, or write, or talk. I got up early, examined the premises and street, and gave a man half-a-crown to let me sit concealed, and watch for her coming out. Day after day I grew more and more enraptured, till resistance was relinquished with a glorious defiance of restraint. Her conduct to her dying husband, her gentle reproof of my impassioned air, riveted my being. But I must not anticipate. Sufficient for the present, O reader, is it to tell thee that B. R. Haydon is, and for ever will be, in love with that woman, and that she is his wife.'

The first note that Haydon has preserved from his friend Keats is dated November 1816, and runs :

'MY DEAR SIR,—Last evening wrought me up, and I cannot forbear sending you the following.—Yours imperfectly,  
JOHN KEATS.'

The 'following' was nothing less than the noble sonnet, beginning—'Great spirits now on earth are sojourning,' with an allusion to Haydon in the lines :

'And lo ! whose steadfastness would never take  
A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.'

Haydon wrote an enthusiastic letter of thanks, gave the young poet some good advice, and promised to send his sonnet to Wordsworth. 'Keats,' he records, 'was the only man I ever met who seemed and looked conscious of a high calling, except Wordsworth. Byron and Shelley were always sophisticating about their verses ; Keats sophisticated about nothing. He had made up his mind to do great things, and when he found that by his connection with the *Examiner* clique he had brought upon himself an overwhelming outcry of unjust aversion, he shrank up into himself, his diseased tendencies showed

themselves, and he died a victim to mistakes, on the part of friends and enemies alike.<sup>7</sup>

Haydon gives a curious account of his first meeting with Shelley, which took place in the course of this year. The occasion was a dinner-party at James Smith's house, when Keats and Horace Smith were also among the guests. 'I seated myself,' writes Haydon, 'right opposite Shelley, as I was told afterwards, for I did not then know what hectic, spare, weakly, yet intellectual-looking creature it was, carving a bit of broccoli or cabbage in his plate, as if it had been the substantial wing of a chicken. In a few minutes Shelley opened the conversation by saying in the most feminine and gentle voice, "As to that detestable religion, the Christian——" I looked astounded, but casting a glance round the table, I easily saw that I was to be set at that evening *vi et armis*. . . . I felt like a stag at bay, and resolved to gore without mercy. Shelley said the Mosaic and Christian dispensation were inconsistent. I swore they were not, and that the Ten Commandments had been the foundation of all the codes of law on the earth. Shelley denied it. I affirmed they were, neither of us using an atom of logic.' This edifying controversy continued until all parties grew very warm, and said unpleasant things to one another. After this dinner, Haydon made up his mind to subject himself no more to the chance of these discussions, but gradually to withdraw from this freethinking circle.

The chief artistic events of the year, from our hero's point of view, were, the final settlement of the Elgin Marbles question, and his own attempt to found a school. The Committee appointed by Government to examine and report upon the Marbles refused to call Haydon as a witness on Lord Elgin's side, but the artist embodied his

views on the subject in a paper which appeared in both the *Examiner* and the *Champion*. This article, which was afterwards translated into French and Italian, contained a scathing attack on Payne Knight, and was said by Sir Thomas Lawrence to have saved the Elgin Marbles, and ruined Haydon. However this may be, the Government, it will be remembered, decided to buy the treasures for £35,000, a sum considerably less than that which Lord Elgin had spent on bringing them to England.

The School of Haydon was first instituted with three distinguished pupils in the persons of the three Landseer brothers, to whom were afterwards added William Bewick, Eastlake, Harvey, Lance, and Chatfield. Haydon set his disciples to draw from the Raphael Cartoons, two of which were brought up from Hampton Court to the British Gallery, and, as soon as they were sufficiently advanced, he sent them to the Museum to draw from the Elgin Marbles. 'Their cartoons,' he writes, 'drawn full size, of the Fates, of Theseus and the Ilissus, literally made a noise in Europe. An order came from the great Goethe at Weimar for a set for his own house, the furniture of which having been since bought by the Government, and the house kept up as it was in Goethe's time, the cartoons of my pupils are thus preserved, whilst in England the rest are lying about in cellars and corners.' The early days of the School thus held out a promise for the future, which unfortunately was not fulfilled. Haydon contrived to involve two or three of his pupils in his own financial embarrassments, by inducing them to sign accommodation bills, a proceeding which broke up the establishment, and brought a lasting stain upon his reputation.

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In 1817 Haydon was introduced to Miss Mitford, who greatly admired his work, and a warm friendship sprang up between the pair. In May, Miss Mitford wrote to Sir William Elford: 'The charm of the Exhibition is a chalk-drawing by Mr. Haydon taken, *as he tells me*, from a mother who had lost her child. It is the very triumph of expression. I have not yet lost the impression which it made upon my mind and senses, and which vented itself in a sonnet.' A visit to the studio followed, and Miss Mitford was charmed with the room, the books, the great unfinished picture, and the artist himself—with his *bonhomie*, *naïveté*, and enthusiasm. With all her heart she admires the noble, independent spirit of Haydon, who, she declares, is quite one of the old heroes come to life again—one of Shakespeare's men, full of spirit, endurance, and moral courage. She concludes her account with an expression of regret that he should be 'such a fright.' Now Haydon is generally described by his contemporaries as a good-looking man, though short in stature, with an antique head, aquiline features, and fine dark eyes. His later portraits are chiefly remarkable for the immensely wide mouth with which he seems to be endowed, but in an early sketch by Wilkie he is represented as a picturesque youth with an admirably modelled profile.

To Miss Mitford we owe a quaint anecdote of our hero, which, better than pages of analysis, depicts the man. It appears that Leigh Hunt, who was a great keeper of birthdays and other anniversaries, took it into his head to celebrate the birthday of Papa Haydn by giving a dinner, drinking toasts, and crowning the composer's bust with laurels. Some malicious person told Haydon that the Hunts were celebrating his birthday, a com-



pliment that struck him as natural and well deserved. Hastening to Hampstead, he broke in upon the company, and addressed to them a formal speech, in which he thanked them for the honour they had done him, but explained that they had made a little mistake in the day! As a pendant to this anecdote, Miss Mitford relates that Haydon told her he had painted the head of his Christ seven times, and that the final head was a portrait of himself. It is only fair to remember that he always regarded it as the least successful part of the work.

While the picture was in progress, Haydon decided to put in a side group with Voltaire as a sceptic, and Newton as a believer. This idea, founded on the intentional anachronisms of some of the old masters, was afterwards extended, Hazlitt being introduced as an investigator, and Wordsworth bowing in reverence, with Keats in the background. The two poets had never yet met in actual life, but in December 1817, Wordsworth being then on a visit to London, Haydon invited Keats to meet him. The other guests were Charles Lamb and Monkhouse. 'Wordsworth was in fine cue,' writes Haydon, 'and we had a glorious set-to—on Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Virgil. Lamb got exceedingly merry, and exquisitely witty, and his fun, in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory, was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion.' Although the specimens of wit recorded no longer seem inspired, we can well believe Haydon's statement that it was an immortal evening, and that in all his life he never passed a more delightful time. We have abundant testimony to the fact that the artist-host was himself an exceptionally fine talker. Hazlitt said that

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‘Haydon talked well on most subjects that interest one; indeed, better than any painter I ever met.’ Wordsworth and Talfourd echoed this opinion, and Miss Mitford tells us that he was a most brilliant talker—racy, bold, original, and vigorous, ‘a sort of Benvenuto Cellini, all air and fire.’

It was not until January 1820 that the ‘Entry into Jerusalem’ was finished, when the artist, though absolutely penniless, engaged the great room at the Egyptian Hall for its exhibition, at a rent of £300. His friends helped him over the incidental expenses, and in a state of feverish excitement he awaited the opening day. Public curiosity had been aroused about the work, and early in the afternoon there was a block of carriages in Piccadilly; the passage was thronged with servants, and soon the artist was holding what he described as a ‘regular rout at noonday.’ While Keats and Hazlitt were rejoicing in a corner, Mrs. Siddons swept in, and in her loud, deep, tragic tones, declared that the head of Christ was completely successful. By her favourable verdict, Haydon, who had his doubts, was greatly consoled, not because Mrs. Siddons had any reputation as an art-critic, but because he recognised that she was an expert on the subject of dramatic expression. A thousand pounds was offered for the picture and refused, while the net profits from the exhibition, in London alone, amounted to £1300. Haydon has been commonly represented as an unlucky man, who was always neglected by the public and the patrons, and never met with his professional deserts. But up to this time, as has been seen, he had found ready sympathy and admiration from the public, practical aid during the time of struggle from his friends, and a fair reward for his labours. With the

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exhibition of the 'Entry into Jerusalem,' his reputation was at its zenith; a little skilful engineering of the success thus gained might have extricated him from his difficulties, and enabled him to keep his head above water for the remainder of his days. But, owing chiefly to his own impracticability, his story from this point is one of decline, gradual at first, but increasing in velocity, until the end came in disaster and despair.

### PART II

EVEN while Haydon was in the first flush of his success, there were signs that he had achieved no lasting triumph. Sir George Beaumont proposed that the British Gallery should buy the great picture, but the Directors refused to give the price asked—£2000. An effort to sell it by subscription fell through, only £200 being paid into Coutts'. When the exhibition closed in London, Haydon took his masterpiece to Scotland, and showed it both in Edinburgh and in Glasgow, netting another £900, which, however, was quickly eaten up by hungry creditors. The picture was too big to tempt a private purchaser, and in spite of the admiration it had aroused, it remained like a white elephant upon its creator's hands.

On his return to town, after being fêted by Sir Walter Scott, Lockhart, and 'Christopher North,' Haydon finished his commission for Sir George Phillips, 'Christ Sleeping in the Garden,' which, he frankly admitted, was one of the worst pictures he ever painted. Scarcely was

this off his easel than he was inspired with a tremendous conception for the 'Raising of Lazarus.' He ordered a canvas such as his soul loved, nineteen feet long by fifteen high, and dashed in his first idea. He was still deeply in debt, still desperately in love (his lady was now a widow), and the new picture would take at least two years to paint. Nevertheless, he worked away with all his customary energy, and prayed fervently that he might paint a great masterpiece, never doubting but that his prayers would be heard.

With the end of this year, 1820, Haydon's Autobiography breaks off, and the rest of his life is told in his Journals and Letters. At the beginning of 1821, when he was fairly at work on his Lazarus, he confides to his Journal his conviction that difficulties are to be his lot in pecuniary matters, and adds: 'My plan must be to make up my mind to meet them, and fag as I can—to lose no single moment, but seize on time that is free from disturbance, and make the most of it. If I can float, and keep alive attention to my situation through another picture, I will reach the shore. I am now clearly in sight of it, and I will yet land to the sound of trumpets, and the shouts of my friends.'

In spite of his absorption in his work, Haydon found time for the society of his literary friends. On March 7, he records: 'Sir Walter Scott, Lamb, Wilkie, and Procter have been with me all the morning, and a delightful morning we have had. Scott operated on us like champagne and whisky mixed. . . . It is singular how success and the want of it operate on two extraordinary men, Walter Scott and Wordsworth. Scott enters a room and sits at table with the coolness and self-possession of conscious fame; Wordsworth with a mortified elevation

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of the head, as if fearful he was not estimated as he deserved. Scott can afford to talk of trifles, because he knows the world will think him a great man who condescends to trifle; Wordsworth must always be eloquent and profound, because he knows that he is considered childish and puerile. . . . I think that Scott's success would have made Wordsworth insufferable, while Wordsworth's failures would not have rendered Scott a whit less delightful. Scott is the companion of Nature in all her moods and freaks, while Wordsworth follows her like an apostle, sharing her solemn moods and impressions.'

In these rough notes, unusual powers of observation and insight into character are displayed. That Haydon also had a keen sense of humour is proved by his account of an evening at Mrs. Siddons' where the hostess read aloud *Macbeth* to her guests. 'She acts *Macbeth* herself much better than either Kemble or Kean,' he writes. 'It is extraordinary the awe that this wonderful woman inspires. After her first reading the men retired to tea. While we were all eating toast and tinkling cups and saucers, she began again. It was like the effect of a mass-bell at Madrid. All noise ceased; we slunk to our seats like boors, two or three of the most distinguished men of the day, with the very toast in their mouths, afraid to bite. It was curious to see Lawrence in this predicament, to hear him bite by degrees, and then stop, for fear of making too much crackle, his eyes full of water from the constraint; and at the same time to hear Mrs. Siddons' 'eye of newt and toe of frog,' and to see Lawrence give a sly bite, and then look awed, and pretend to be listening.'

In the spring of 1821 Haydon lost two intimate

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friends, John Scott, who was killed by Christie in the Blackwood duel, and Keats, who died at Rome on February 23. He briefly sums up his impressions of the dead poet in his *Journal*. 'In fireside conversation he was weak and inconsistent, but he was in his glory in the fields. . . . He was the most unselfish of human creatures: unadapted to this world, he cared not for himself, and put himself to inconvenience for the sake of his friends. He had an exquisite sense of humour, and too refined a notion of female purity to bear the little arts of love with patience. . . . He began life full of hopes, fiery, impetuous, ungovernable, expecting the world to fall at once beneath his powers. Unable to bear the sneers of ignorance or the attacks of envy, he began to despond, and flew to dissipation as a relief. For six weeks he was scarcely sober, and to show what a man does to gratify his appetites when once they get the better of him, he once covered his tongue and throat, as far as he could reach, with Cayenne pepper, in order to appreciate the "delicious coldness of claret in all its glory"—his own expression.'

June 22, 1821, is entered in the *Journal* as 'A remarkable day in my life. I am arrested!' This incident, unfortunately, became far too common in after-days to be at all remarkable, but the first touch of the bailiff's hand was naturally something of a shock, and Haydon filled three folio pages with angry comments on the iniquity of the laws against debtors. He was able, however, to arrange the affair before night, and the sheriff's officer, whose duty it was to keep him in safe custody during the day, was so profoundly impressed by the sight of the Lazarus, that he allowed his prisoner to go free on parole. This incident has been likened to

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that of the bravoës arrested in their murderous intent by the organ-playing of Stradella ; and also to the case of the soldiers of the Constable who, when sacking Rome, broke into Parmigiano's studio, but were so struck by the beauty of his pictures that they protected him and his property.

In despite of debts, difficulties, and the lack of commissions, Haydon, who had now been in love for five years, was married on October 10, 1821, to the young widow, Mary Hyman, who was blessed with two children, and a jointure of fifty pounds a year. His Journal for this period is full of raptures over his blissful state, as also are his letters to his friends. To Miss Mitford he writes from Windsor, where the honeymoon was spent: 'Here I am, sitting by my dearest Mary with all the complacency of a well-behaved husband, writing to you while she is working quietly on some unintelligible part of a lady's costume. You do not know how proud I am of saying *my wife*. I never felt half so proud of Solomon or Macbeth, as I am of being the husband of this tender little bit of lovely humanity. . . . There never was such a creature ; and although her face is perfect, and has more feeling in it than Lady Hamilton's, her manner to me is perfectly enchanting, and more bewitching than her beauty. I think I shall put over my painting-room door, "Love, solitude, and painting." ' On the last day of the year, according to his wont, Haydon sums up his feelings and impressions of the past twelve months. 'I don't know how it is, but I get less reflective as I get older. I seem to take things as they come without thought. Perhaps being married to my dearest Mary, and having no longer anything to hope in love, I get more content with my lot, which, God knows, is rapturous

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beyond imagination. Here I sit sketching, with the loveliest face before me, smiling and laughing, and "solitude is not." Marriage has increased my happiness beyond expression. In the intervals of study, a few minutes' conversation with a creature one loves is the greatest of all reliefs. God bless us both! My pecuniary difficulties are great, but my love is intense, my ambition is intense, and my hope in God's protection cheering. Bewick, my pupil, has realised my hopes in his picture of "Jacob and Rachel." But it is cold work talking of pupils when one's soul is full of a beloved woman! I am really and truly in love, and without affectation, I can talk, write, or think of nothing else.'

But if a love-match brings increased happiness, it also brings weightier cares and responsibilities. Haydon's credit had been in a measure restored by the success of his last picture, but his creditors seemed to resent his marriage, and during the months that followed, gave him little peace. He was obliged, in the intervals of painting, to rush hither and thither to pacify this creditor, quiet the fears of that, remove the ill-will of a third, and borrow money at usurious interest from a fourth in order to keep his engagements with a fifth. In spite of all his compromises and arrangements, he was arrested more than once during this year, but so far he had been able to keep out of prison. His favourite pupil Bewick, who sat to him for the head of Lazarus (being appropriately pale and thin from want of food) has left an account of the difficulties under which the picture was painted. 'I think I see the painter before me,' he writes, 'his palette and brushes in the left hand, returning from the sheriff's officer in the adjoining room, pale, calm, and serious—no agitation—mounting his



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high steps and continuing his arduous task, and as he looks round to his pallid model, whispering, "Egad, Bewick, I have just been arrested; that is the third time. If they come again, I shall not be able to go on."

On December 7, the Lazarus was finished, and five days later Haydon's eldest son Frank was born. The happy father was profoundly moved by his new responsibilities, as well as by his wife's suffering and danger. On the last day of 1822 he thanks his Maker for the happiest year of his life, and also 'for being permitted to finish another great picture, which must add to my reputation, and go to strengthen the art. . . . Grant it triumphant success. Grant that I may soon begin the "Crucifixion," and persevere with that, until I bring it to a conclusion equally positive and glorious.' Haydon's prayers, which have been not inaptly described as 'begging letters to the Almighty,' are invariably couched in terms that would be appropriate in an appeal to the President of a Celestial Academy. As his biographer points out, he prayed as though he would take heaven by storm, and although he often asked for humility, the demands for this gift bore very little proportion to those for glories and triumphs.

The Lazarus, though it showed signs of haste and exaggeration, natural enough considering the conditions under which it was painted, was acclaimed as a great work, and the receipts from its exhibition were of a most satisfactory nature, mounting up to nearly two hundred pounds a week. Instead of calling his creditors together, and coming to some arrangement with them, Haydon, rendered over-confident by success, spent his time in preparing a new and vaster canvas for his conception of the Crucifixion. The sight of crowds of people paying

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their shillings to view the Lazarus roused the cupidity of one of the creditors, who, against his own interests, killed the goose that was laying golden eggs. On April 13, an execution was put in, and the picture was seized. A few days later Haydon was arrested, and carried to the King's Bench, his house was taken possession of, and all his property was advertised for sale.

On April 22, he dates the entry in his Journal, 'King's Bench,' and consoles himself with the reflection that Bacon, Raleigh, and Cervantes had also suffered imprisonment. His friends rallied round him at this melancholy period. Lord Mulgrave, Sir George Beaumont, Scott and Wilkie, giving not only sympathy but practical help. At his forced sale a portion of his casts and painting materials was bought in by his friends in order that he might be enabled to set to work again as soon as he was released from prison. A meeting of creditors was called, and Haydon addressed to them a characteristic letter, begging to be spared the disgrace of 'taking the Act,' and complaining of the hardship of his treatment in being torn from his family and his art, after devoting the best years of his life to the honour of his country. But as the creditors cared nothing for the honour of the country, he was compelled to pass through the Bankruptcy Court, and on July 25 he regained his freedom. It was now his desire to return to his dismantled house, and, without a bed to lie upon, or a shilling in his pocket, to finish his gigantic 'Crucifixion.' But his wife, the long-suffering Mary, persuaded him to abandon this idea, to retire to modest lodgings for a time, and to paint portraits and cabinet-pictures until better fortune dawned.

Haydon yielded to her desire, but he never ceased to

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regret what he considered his degradation. He would have preferred to allow his friends and creditors to support himself and his family, while he worked at a canvas of unsaleable size, a proceeding that most men would regard as involving a deeper degradation than painting pot-boilers.

Haydon began his new career by painting the 'portrait of a gentleman.' 'Ah, my poor lay-figure,' he groans, 'he, who bore the drapery of Christ and the grave-clothes of Lazarus, the cloak of the centurion and the gown of Newton, was to-day disgraced by a black coat and waist-coat. I apostrophised him, and he seemed to sympathise, and bowed his head as if ashamed to look me in the face.' Haydon's detestation of portrait-painting probably arose from the secret consciousness that he was not successful in this branch of his art. His taste for the grandiose led him to depict his sitters larger than life, if not 'twice as natural.' His objection to painting small pictures was partly justified by his weakness of sight. It was easy for him to dash in heads on a large scale in a frenzy of inspiration, but he seemed to lack the faculty for 'finish.' The faults of disproportion and apparent carelessness that disfigure many of his works, are easily accounted for by his method of painting, which is thus described by his son Frederick, who often acted as artist's model:—

'His natural sight was of little or no use to him at any distance, and he would wear, one over the other, two or three pairs of large round concave spectacles, so powerful as greatly to diminish objects. He would mount his steps, look at you through one pair of glasses, then push them all back on his head, and paint by the naked eye close to the canvas. After some minutes he would pull

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down one pair of his glasses, look at you, then step down, walk slowly backwards to the wall, and study the effect through one, two, or three pairs of spectacles; then with one pair only look long and steadily in the looking-glass at the side to examine the reflection of his work; then mount his steps and paint again. How he ever contrived to paint a head or limb in proportion is a mystery to me, for it is clear that he had lost his natural sight in boyhood. He is, as he said, the first blind man who ever successfully painted pictures.'

Unfortunately, Haydon's self-denial in painting portraits was not well rewarded, for commissions were few, and the clouds began to gather again. One of his sitters had to be appealed to for money for coals, and if such appeals were frequent, the scarcity of sitters was hardly surprising. On one occasion he pawned all his books, except a few old favourites, for three pounds, and entries like the following are of almost daily occurrence in the Journal:—'Obliged to go out in the rain, I left my room with no coals in it, and no money to buy any. . . . Not a shilling in the world. Sold nothing, and not likely to. Baker called, and was insolent. If he were to stop the supplies, God knows what would become of my children! Landlord called—kind and sorry. Butcher called, respectful, but disappointed. Tailor good - humoured, and willing to wait. . . . Walked about the town. I was so full of grief, I could not have concealed it at home.'

In the midst of all his harassing anxieties, Haydon was untiring in his efforts to obtain employment of the heroic kind that his soul craved. He had begun to realise that he had small chance of disposing of huge historical pictures to private patrons, and that his only

hope rested with the Government. Even while confined in prison he had persuaded Brougham to present a petition to the House of Commons setting forth the desirability of appointing a Committee to inquire into the state of national art, and by a regular distribution of a small portion of the public funds, to give public encouragement to the professors of historical painting. No sooner did he regain his freedom than Haydon attacked Sir Charles Long with a plan for the decoration of the great room of the Admiralty, to be followed by the decoration of the House of Lords and St. Paul's Cathedral. This was but the beginning of a long series of impassioned pleadings with public men in favour of national employment for historical painters. Silence, snubs, formal acknowledgments, curt refusals, all were lost upon Haydon, who kept pouring in page after page of agonised petition on Sir Charles Long, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Grey, Lord Melbourne, and Sir Robert Peel, and seemed to be making no way with any of them.

Haydon thought himself ill-used, throughout his life, by statesmen and patrons, and many of his friends were of the same opinion. But both he and they ignored the fact that it is impossible to create an artificial market for works of art for which there is no spontaneous popular demand. A despotic prince may, if he chooses, give his court painter *carte blanche* for the decorations of national buildings, and gain nothing but glory for his liberality, even when it is exercised at the expense of his people. But in a country that possesses a constitutional government, more especially when that country has been impoverished by long and costly wars, the minister who devotes large sums to the encouragement of national art has the indignation of an

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over-taxed populace to reckon with. It is little short of an insult to offer men historic frescoes when they are clamouring for bread. Haydon was unfortunate in his period, which was not favourable for a crusade on behalf of high art. The recent pacification of the Continent, and the opening up of its treasures, tempted English noblemen and plutocrats to invest their money in old masters to the neglect of native artists, who were only thought worthy to paint portraits of their patrons' wives and children. We who have inherited the Peel, the Angerstein, and the Hertford collections, can scarcely bring ourselves to regret the sums that were lavished on Flemish and Italian masterpieces, sums that might have kept our Barrys and Haydons from bankruptcy.

In January 1824 Haydon left his lodgings, and took the lease of a house in Connaught Terrace, for which he paid, or promised to pay, a hundred and twenty pounds a year, a heavy rent for a recently insolvent artist. Fortunately, he acquired with the house a landlord of amazing benevolence, who took pot-boilers in lieu of rent, and meekly submitted to abuse when nothing else was forthcoming. As soon as he was fairly settled, Haydon arranged the composition of a large picture of 'Pharaoh dismissing Moses,' upon which he worked in the intervals of portrait-painting. A curious and obviously impartial sketch of him, as he appeared at this time, is drawn by Borrow in his *Lavengro*. The hero's elder brother comes up to town, it may be remembered, to commission a certain heroic artist to paint an heroic picture of a very unheroic mayor of Norwich. The two brothers go together to the painter of Lazarus, and have some difficulty in obtaining admission to his studio, being mistaken by the servant for duns. They found a man of

about thirty-five, with a clever, intelligent countenance, sharp grey eyes, and hair cut *à la* Raphael. He possessed, moreover, a broad chest, and would have been a very fine figure if his legs had not been too short. He was then engaged upon his Moses, whose legs, in Lavengro's opinion, were also too short. His eyes glistened at the mention of a hundred pounds for the mayor's portrait, and he admitted that he was confoundedly short of money. The painter was anxious that Lavengro should sit to him for his Plutarch, which honour that gentleman firmly declined. Years afterwards he saw the portrait of the mayor, a 'mighty portly man, with a bull's head, black hair, a body like a dray horse, and legs and thighs corresponding; a man six foot high at the least. To his bull's head, black hair and body, the painter had done justice; there was one point, however, in which the portrait did not correspond with the original—the legs were disproportionately short, the painter having substituted his own legs for those of the mayor, which, when I perceived, I rejoiced that I had not consented to be painted as Pharaoh, for if I had, the chances are that he would have served me in exactly the same way as he had served Moses and the mayor.'

The painting of provincial mayors was so little to Haydon's taste that by the close of this year we find him in deep depression of spirits, unrelieved by even a spark of his old sanguine buoyancy. 'I candidly confess,' he writes, 'I find my glorious art a bore. I cannot with pleasure paint any individual head for the mere purpose of domestic gratification. I must have a great subject to excite public feeling. . . . Alas! I have no object in life now but my wife and children, and almost wish I had not them, that I might sit still and meditate on

human grandeur and human ambition till I died. . . . I am not yet forty, and can tell of a destiny melancholy and rapturous, bitter beyond all bitterness, cursed, heart-breaking, maddening. But I dare not write now. The melancholy demon has grappled my heart, and crushed its turbulent beatings in his black, bony, clammy, clenching fingers.'

It was just when things seemed at their darkest, when the waters threatened to overwhelm the unfortunate artist, that a rope was thrown to him. His legal adviser, Mr. Kearsley, a practical and prosperous man, came forward with an offer of help. He agreed to provide £300 for one year on certain conditions, in order that Haydon might be freed from pressure for that period, and be in a position to ask a fair price for his work. When not engaged on portraits, he was to paint historical pictures of a saleable size. The advance was to be secured on a life insurance, and to be repaid out of the sale of the pictures, with interest at four per cent. This offer was accepted with some reluctance, and the following year was one of comparative peace and quiet. The *Journal* gives evidence of greater ease of mind, and renewed pleasure in work. Haydon's love for his wife waxed rather than waned with the passing of the years, and his children, of whom he too soon had the poor man's quiverful, were an ever-present delight. 'My domestic happiness is doubled,' he writes about this time. 'Daily and hourly my sweet Mary proves the justice of my choice. My boy Frank gives tokens of being gifted at two years old, God bless him! My ambition would be to make him a public man. . . . I have got into my old delightful habits of study again. The mixture of literature and painting I really think the perfection of human happiness. I



paint a head, revel in colour, hit an expression, sit down fatigued, take up a poet or historian, write my own thoughts, muse on the thoughts of others, and hours, troubles, and the tortures of disappointed ambition pass and are forgotten.'

Portraits, and one or two commissions for small pictures, kept Haydon afloat throughout this year, but a widespread commercial distress in the early part of 1826 affected his gains, and in February he records that for the last five weeks he has been suffering the tortures of the Inferno. He was persuaded, much against his will, to send his pictures to the Academy, and he was proportionately annoyed at the adverse criticism that greeted his attempts at portraiture. This attack he regarded as the result of a deep-laid plot to injure him in a lucrative branch of his art. He consoled himself by beginning a large picture of 'Alexander taming Bucephalus,' the 'finest subject on earth.' Through his friend and opposite neighbour, Carew the sculptor, Haydon made an appeal to Lord Egremont, that generous patron of the arts, for help or employment, in response to which Lord Egremont promised to call and see the Alexander. There is a pathetic touch in the account of this visit, on which so much depended. Lord Egremont called at Carew's house on his way, and Haydon, who saw him go in, relates that 'Dear Mary and I were walking on the leads, and agreed that it would not be quite right to look too happy, being without a sixpence; so we came in, I to the parlour to look through the blinds, and she to the nursery.' Happily, the patron was favourably impressed by the picture, and promised to give £600 for it when it was finished. In order to pay his models Haydon was obliged to pawn one of his two lay-figures, since he could not bring himself

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to part with any more books. 'I may do without a lay-figure for a time,' he writes, 'but not without old Homer. The truth is I am fonder of books than of anything on earth. I consider myself a man of great powers, excited to an art which limits their exercise. In politics, law, or literature they would have had a full and glorious swing, and I should have secured a competence.'

The fact that Haydon was more at home among the literary men of his acquaintance than among his fellow-artists was a natural result of his intense love of books, and his keen interest in contemporary history. And it is evident that his own character and work impressed his poetical friends, for we find that not only Wordsworth and Keats, but Leigh Hunt, Charles Lamb, Miss Mitford, and Miss Barrett addressed to him admiring verses. For Byron, whom he never knew, Haydon cherished an ardent admiration, and the following interesting passage, comparing that poet with Wordsworth, occurs in one of his letters to Miss Mitford, who had criticised Byron's taste :—

'You are unjust, depend upon it,' he writes, 'in your estimate of Byron's poetry, and wrong in ranking Wordsworth beyond him. There are things in Byron's poetry so exquisite that fifty or five hundred years hence they will be read, felt, and adored throughout the world. I grant that Wordsworth is very pure, very holy, very orthodox, and occasionally very elevated, highly poetical, and oftener insufferably obscure, starched, dowdy, anti-human, and anti-sympathetic, but he never will be ranked above Byron, nor classed with Milton. . . . I dislike his selfish Quakerism, his affectation of superior virtue, his utter insensibility to the frailties, the beautiful frailties of passion. I was walking with him once in Pall Mall; we

darted into Christie's. In the corner of the room was a beautiful copy of the "Cupid and Psyche" (statues) kissing. Cupid is taking her lovely chin, and turning her pouting mouth to meet his, while he archly bends down, as if saying, "Pretty dear!" . . . Catching sight of the Cupid as he and I were coming out, Wordsworth's face reddened, he showed his teeth, and then said in a loud voice, "*The Dev-v-ils!*" There's a mind! Ought not this exquisite group to have softened his heart as much as his old, grey-mossed rocks, his withered thorn, and his dribbling mountain streams? I am altered very much about Wordsworth from finding him too hard, too elevated, to attend to the voice of humanity. No, give me Byron with all his spite, hatred, depravity, dandyism, vanity, frankness, passion, and idleness, rather than Wordsworth with all his heartless communion with woods and grass.'

An attempt on Haydon's part to reconcile himself with his old enemies, the Academicians, ended in failure. He heads his account of the transaction, 'The disgrace of my life.' He was received with cold civility by the majority of the artists to whom he paid conciliatory visits, and when he put his name down for election, he received not a single vote. A more agreeable memory of this year was a visit to Petworth, where, as he records, with Pepysian *naïveté*, 'Lord Egremont has placed me in one of the most magnificent bedrooms I ever saw. It speaks more of what he thinks of my talents than anything that ever happened to me. . . . What a destiny is mine! One year in the King's Bench, the companion of gamblers and scoundrels—sleeping in wretchedness and dirt on a flock-bed—another reposing in down and velvet in a splendid apartment in a splendid house, the guest of rank, fashion, and beauty.'

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Haydon's painting-room was now, as he loved to see it, crowded with distinguished visitors, who were anxious to inspect the picture of Alexander before it was sent to the Exhibition. Among them came Charles Lamb, who afterwards set down some impressions and suggestions in the following characteristic fashion :—

‘DEAR RAFFAELE HAYDON,

‘Did the maid tell you I came to see your picture? I think the face and bearing of the Bucephalus-tamer very noble, his flesh too effeminate or painty. . . . I had small time to pick out praise or blame, for two lord-like Bucks came in, upon whose strictures my presence seemed to impose restraint; I plebeian'd off therefore.

‘I think I have hit on a subject for you, but can't swear it was never executed—I never heard of its being—“Chaucer beating a Franciscan Friar in Fleet Street.” Think of the old dresses, houses, etc. “It seemeth that both these learned men (Gower and Chaucer) were of the Inner Temple; for not many years since Master Buckley did see a record in the same house where Geoffrey Chaucer was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan Friar in Fleet Street.”—*Chaucer's Life*, by T. Speght.—Yours in haste (salt fish waiting).

‘C. LAMB.’

In June Haydon was again arrested, and imprisoned in the King's Bench. Once more he appealed to Parliament by a petition presented by Brougham, and to the public through letters to the newspapers. Parliament and the larger public turned a deaf ear, but private friends rallied to his support. Scott, himself a ruined man, sent a cheque and a charming

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letter of sympathy, while Lockhart suggested that a subscription should be raised to buy one or more pictures. A public meeting of sympathisers was convened, at which it was stated that Haydon's debts amounted to £1767, while his only available asset was an unfinished picture of the 'Death of Eucles.' Over a hundred pounds was subscribed in the room, and it was decided that the Eucles should be raffled in ten-pound shares. The result of these efforts was the release of the prisoner at the end of July.

During this last term of imprisonment Haydon witnessed the masquerade, or mock election by his fellow-prisoners, and instantly decided that he would paint the scene, which offered unique opportunities for both humour and pathos. This picture, Hogarthian in type, was finished and exhibited before the close of the year. The exhibition was moderately successful, but the picture did not sell, and Haydon was once more sinking into despair, when the king expressed a desire to have the work sent down to Windsor for his inspection. Hopes were raised high once more, and this time were not disappointed. George IV. bought the 'Mock Election,' and promptly paid the price of five hundred guineas. Thus encouraged, Haydon set to work with renewed spirit on a companion picture, 'Chairing the Member,' which was finished and exhibited, with some earlier works, in the course of the summer. The king refused to buy the new work, but it found a purchaser at £300, and the net receipts from the two pictures and their exhibition amounted to close upon £1400, a sum which, observes Haydon, in better circumstances and with less expense, would have afforded a comfortable independence for the year!

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The Eucles occupied the artist during the remainder of 1828, and early in 1829 he began a new Hogarthian subject, a Punch and Judy show. He was still painting portraits when he could get sitters, and on April 15, he notes: 'Finished one cursed portrait—have only one more to touch, and then I shall be free. I have an exquisite gratification in painting portraits wretchedly. I love to see the sitters look as if they thought, "Can this be Haydon's—the great Haydon's painting?"' I chuckle. I am rascal enough to take their money, and chuckle more.' It must be owned that Haydon thoroughly deserved his ill-success in this branch of his art. When 'Punch' was finished the king sent for it to Windsor, but though he admired, he did not buy, and the picture eventually passed into the possession of Haydon's old friend, Dr. Darling, who had helped him out of more than one difficulty. A large representation of 'Xenophon and the Retreat of the Ten Thousand' was now begun, but before it was finished the painter was once more in desperate straits. In vain he sent up urgent petitions to his Maker that he might be enabled to go through with this great work, explaining in a parenthesis, 'It will be my greatest,' and concluding, 'Bless its commencement, its progress, its conclusion, and its effect, for the sake of the intellectual elevation of my great and glorious country.'

In May 1830, Haydon was back again in the King's Bench, where he had begun to feel quite at home. He presented yet another of his innumerable petitions to Parliament in favour of Government encouragement of historical painting, through Mr. Agar Ellis, but as the ministry showed no desire to encourage this particular historical painter, he passed through the Bankruptcy Court,

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and returned to his family on the 20th of July. During his period of detention, George IV. had died, and Haydon has the following comment on the event:— 'Thus died as thoroughbred an Englishman as ever existed in this country. He admired her sports, gloried in her prejudices, had confidence in her bottom and spirit, and to him alone is the destruction of Napoleon owing. I have lost in him my sincere admirer; and had not his wishes been continually thwarted, he would have given me ample and adequate employment.'

Although Haydon had regained his freedom, his chance of maintaining himself and his rapidly increasing family by his art seemed as far away as ever. By October 15th he is at his wits' end again, and writes in his Journal: 'The harassings of a family are really dreadful. Two of my children are ill, and Mary is nursing. All night she was attending to the sick and hushing the suckling, with a consciousness that our last shilling was going. I got up in the morning bewildered—Xenophon hardly touched—no money—butcher impudent—all tradesmen insulting. I took up my private sketch-book and two prints of Napoleon (from a small picture of 'Napoleon musing at St. Helena') and walked into the city. Hughes advanced me five guineas on the sketch-book; I sold my prints, and returned home happy with £8, 4s. in my pocket. . . . (25th) Out selling my prints. Sold enough for maintenance for the week. Several people looked hard at me with my roll of prints, but I feel more ashamed in borrowing money than in honestly selling my labours. It is a pity the nobility drive me to this by their neglect.'

In December came another stroke of good-luck. Sir Robert Peel called at the studio, and gave the artist a

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commission to paint, on a larger scale, a replica of his small sketch of 'Napoleon at St. Helena.' Unluckily, there was a misunderstanding about the price. Peel asked how much Haydon charged for a whole length figure, and was told a hundred pounds, which was the price of an ordinary portrait. Taking this to be the charge for the Napoleon, he paid no more. Haydon, who considered the picture well worth £500, was bitterly disappointed, and took no pains to conceal his feelings. Peel afterwards sent him an extra thirty pounds, but the subject remained a grievance to Haydon for the rest of his life, and Peel, who had intended to do the artist a good turn, was so annoyed by his complaints, that he never gave him another commission. The Napoleon, though its exhibition was not a success, was one of Haydon's most popular pictures, and the engraving is well known. Wordsworth admired it exceedingly, and on June 12, sent the artist the 'Sonnet to B. R. Haydon, composed on seeing his picture of Napoleon in the island of St. Helena,' beginning:

'Haydon! let worthier judges praise the skill.'

The close of this year was a melancholy period to poor Haydon. He lost his little daughter, Fanny, and his third son, Alfred, was gradually fading away. Out of eight children born to this most affectionate of fathers, no fewer than five died in infancy from suffusion of the brain, due, it was supposed, to the terrible mental distresses of their mother. 'I can remember,' writes Frederick Haydon, one of the three survivors, 'the roses of her sunken cheeks fading away daily with anxiety and grief. My father, who was passionately attached to both wife and children, suffered the tortures



of the damned at the sight before him. His sorrow over the deaths of his children was something more than human. I remember watching him as he hung over his daughter Georgiana, and over his dying boy Harry, the pride and delight of his life. Poor fellow, how he cried ! and he went into the next room, and beating his head passionately on the bed, called upon God to take him and all of us from this dreadful world. The earliest and most painful death was to be preferred to our life at that time.'

By dint of borrowing in every possible quarter, generally at forty per cent. interest, and inducing his patrons to take shares in his *Xenophon*, Haydon managed to get through the winter, though his children were often without stockings. William iv. consented to place his name at the head of the subscribers' list, and Goethe wrote a flattering letter, expressing his desire to take a ticket for the 'very valuable painting,' and assuring the artist that 'my soul has been elevated for many years by the contemplation of the important pictures (the cartoons from the Elgin Marbles) formerly sent to me, which occupy an honourable station in my house.' *Xenophon* was exhibited in the spring of 1832 without attracting much attention, the whole nation being engrossed with the subject of Reform. Haydon, though a high Tory by birth and inclination, was an ardent champion of the Bill, as he had been for that of Catholic Emancipation. His brush was once more exchanged for the pen, and he not only poured out his thoughts upon Reform in his *Journal*, but wrote several letters on the subject to the *Times*, which he considered the most wonderful compositions of the kind that had ever been penned. After the passing of the Bill he congratulates

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himself upon having contributed to the grand result, and adds: 'When my colours have faded, my canvas decayed, and my body has mingled with the earth, these glorious letters, the best things I ever wrote, will awaken the enthusiasm of my countrymen. I thanked God I lived in such a time, and that he gifted me with talent to serve the great cause.'

On reading the account of the monster meeting of the Trades Unions at Newhall Hill, Birmingham, it occurred to Haydon that the moment when the vast concourse joined in the sudden prayer offered up by Hugh Hutton, would make a fine subject for a picture. Accordingly, he wrote to Hutton, and laid the suggestion before him. The Birmingham leaders were attracted by the idea, and the picture was begun, but support of a material kind was not forthcoming, and the scheme had to be abandoned. Lord Grey then suggested that Haydon should paint a picture of the great Reform Banquet, which was to be held in the Guildhall on July 11. The proposal was exactly to the taste of the public-spirited artist, who saw fame and fortune beckoning to him once more, and fancied that his future was assured. He was allowed every facility on the great day, breakfasted and dined with the Committee at the Guildhall, was treated with distinction by the noble guests, many of whom sent to take wine with him as he sat at work, and in short, to quote his own words, 'I was an object of great distinction without five shillings in my pocket—and this is life!'

Lord Grey, on seeing Haydon's sketches of the Banquet, gave him a commission for the picture at a price of £500, half of which he paid down at once, and thus saved the painter from the ruin that was again impend-

ing. Then followed a period of triumphant happiness. The leading men of the Liberal party sat for their heads, and Haydon had the longed-for opportunity of pressing upon them his views about the public encouragement of art by means of grants for the decoration of national buildings. Although it does not appear that he made a single convert, he was quite contented for the time being with the ready access to ministers and noblemen that the occasion afforded him, and his *Journal* is filled with expressions of his satisfaction. We hear of Lord Palmerston's good-humoured elegance, Lord Lansdowne's amiability, Lord Jeffrey's brilliant conversation, and, most delightful of all, Lord Melbourne's frank, unaffected cordiality. Melbourne, it appears, enjoyed his sittings, for he asked many questions about Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Keats, and Shelley, and highly appreciated Haydon's anecdotes. Needless to add, he did not allow himself to be bored by the artist's theories.

The sittings for the Reform picture continued through 1833, and the early part of 1834. Haydon was kept in full employment, but domestic sorrows marred his satisfaction in his interesting work. In less than twelve months, he lost two sons, Alfred and Harry, the latter a child of extraordinary promise. 'The death of this beautiful boy,' he writes, 'has given my mind a blow I shall never effectually recover. I saw him buried to-day, after passing four days sketching his dear head in his coffin—his beautiful head. What a creature! With a brow like an ancient god!' In August Haydon was arrested again, and hurried away for a day and night of torture, during which, he confesses, he was very near putting an end to himself; but advances from the Duke of Cleveland and Mr. Ellice brought him

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release, and in a few hours he was at home again, 'as happy and as hard at work as ever.'

In April 1834, the Reform picture was exhibited, but the public was not interested, and Haydon lost a considerable sum over the exhibition. The price of the commission had long since gone to quiet the clamours of his creditors. On May 12 he writes: 'It is really lamentable to see the effect of success and failure on people of fashion. Last year, all was hope, exultation, and promise with me. My door was beset, my house besieged, my room inundated. It was an absolute fight to get in to see me paint. Well, out came the work—the public felt no curiosity—it failed, and my door is deserted, no horses, no carriages. Now for executions, insults, misery, and wretchedness.' Then follows the old story. 'June 7.—Mary and I in agony of mind. All my Italian books, and some of my best historical designs, are gone to a pawnbroker's. She packed up her best gowns and the children's, and I drove away with what cost me £40, and got £4. The state of degradation, humiliation, and pain of mind in which I sat in that dingy back-room is not to be described.'

Haydon now began a picture of 'Cassandra and Agamemnon,' and in July he received a commission to finish it for the Duke of Sutherland, who had more than once saved him from ruin. On this occasion the Duke's advances barely sufficed to stave off disaster. Studies, prints, clothes, and lay-figures were pawned to pay for the expenses of the work, and on October comes the entry: 'Directly after the Duke's letter came with its enclosed cheque, an execution was put in for the taxes. I made the man sit for Cassandra's hand,

and put on a Persian bracelet. When the broker came for his money, he burst out laughing. There was the fellow, an old soldier, pointing in the attitude of Cassandra—upright and steady as if on guard. Lazarus' head was painted just after an arrest; Eucles was finished from a man in possession; the beautiful face in Xenophon, after a morning spent in begging mercy of lawyers; and now Cassandra's head was finished in an agony not to be described, and her hand completed from a broker's man.'

## PART III

ON October 16, 1834, the Houses of Parliament were burned down. 'Good God!' writes Haydon, 'I am just returned from the terrific burning of the Houses of Parliament. Mary and I went in a cab, and drove over the bridge. From the bridge it was sublime. We alighted, and went into a public-house, which was full. The feeling among the people was extraordinary—jokes and radicalism universal. . . . The comfort is that there is now a better prospect of painting the House of Lords. Lord Grey said there was no intention of taking the tapestry down; little did he think how soon it would go.' Haydon's hopes now rose high. For many years, as we have seen, he had been advocating, in season and out of season, the desirability of decorating national buildings with heroic paintings by native artists, and, with the need for new Houses of Parliament, it seemed as if at last his cause might triumph. Once more he attacked the good-humoured but unimpressible Lord

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Melbourne, and presented another petition to Parliament through Lord Morpeth. But in any case it would be years before the new buildings were ready for decoration, and in the meantime he would have been entirely out of employment if his long-suffering landlord had not allowed him to paint off a debt with a picture of ‘Achilles at the Court of Lycomedes.’

In the summer of this year Mr. Ewart obtained his Select Committee to inquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the arts and the principles of design among the people; and further, to inquire into the constitution of the Royal Academy, and the effects produced thereby. Haydon, overjoyed at such a sign of progress, determined to aid the inquiry by giving a lecture on the subject at the London Mechanics’ Institute, under the auspices of Dr. Birkbeck. The lecture was a success, for Haydon’s natural earnestness and enthusiasm enabled him to interest and impress an audience, and Dr. Birkbeck assured him that he had made a ‘hit.’ This was the beginning of his career as a lecturer, by which for several years he earned a small but regular income. But meanwhile ruin was again staring him in the face. On September 26 he writes: ‘The agony of my necessities is really dreadful. For this year I have principally supported myself by the help of my landlord, and by pawning everything of value I have left. . . . Lay awake in misery. Threatened on all sides. Doubtful whether to apply to the Insolvent Court to protect me, or let ruin come. Improved the picture, and not having a shilling, sent out a pair of my spectacles, and got five shillings for the day. (29th) Sent the tea-urn off the table, and got ten shillings for the day. Shall call my creditors together. In God I trust.’

The meeting of the creditors took place, and Haydon persuaded them to grant him an extension of time until June, 1836. Thus relieved from immediate anxiety he set to work on his picture with renewed zest. The most remarkable trait about him, observes his son Frederick, was his sanguine buoyancy of spirits. 'Nothing ever depressed him long. He was the most persevering, indomitable man I ever met. With us at home he was always confident of doing better next year. But that next year never came. . . . Blest as he was with that peculiar faculty of genius for overcoming difficulties, he might have found life tame without them. I remember his saying once, he was not sure he did not relish ruin as a source of increased activity of mind.' But the struggle had begun to tell upon his powers, if not upon his spirits, and 'he was now painting pictures for bread; repeating himself; despatching a work in a few days that in better times he would have spent months over; ready to paint small things, since great ones would not sell; fighting misery at the point of his brush, and obliged to eke out a livelihood by begging and borrowing, in default of worse expedients such as bills and cognovits. A less elastic temperament and a less vigorous constitution would have broken down in one year of such a fight. Haydon kept it up for ten.'

The first half of 1836 went by in the usual struggle, and in September Haydon was thrown into prison for the fourth time. On November 17 he passed through the Insolvency Court, and on the following Sunday he records: 'Went to church, and returned thanks with all my heart and soul for the great mercies of God to me and my family during my imprisonment. . . . (29th) Set my palette to-day, the first time these eleven weeks

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and three days. I relished the oil; could have tasted the colour; rubbed my cheeks with the brushes, and kissed the palette. Ah, could I be let loose in the House of Lords!’ In the absence of commissions, he now turned to lecturing as a means of support. He lectured in Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham, as well as in London, and did good service by agitating for the establishment of local schools of design, and by arousing in the minds of the wealthy middle classes some faint appreciation of the claims of art.

A valuable result of these lectures was the extension of Haydon’s acquaintance among the shrewd merchant princes of the north, who recognised his artistic sincerity, and were inclined to hold out to him a helping hand. Through the influence of Mr. Lowndes, a Liverpool art-patron, Haydon received a commission to paint a picture of ‘Christ blessing Little Children,’ for the Blind Asylum at Liverpool, at a price of £400. So elated was he at this unexpected piece of good fortune that, with characteristic sanguineness, he seems to have thought that all his troubles were at an end for ever. Even his pious dependence on heavenly support diminished with his freedom from care, and he notes in a Sunday entry: ‘Went to church, but prosperity, though it makes me grateful, does not cause me such perpetual religious musings as adversity. When on a precipice, where nothing but God’s protection can save me, I delight in religious hope, but I am sorry to say my religion ever dwindles unless kept alive by risk of ruin. My piety is never so intense as when in a prison, and my gratitude never so much alive as when I have just escaped from one.’

The year 1838 passed in comparative peace and comfort.



The picture for the asylum was finished about the end of August, when Haydon congratulated his Maker on the fact that he (Haydon) had paid his rent and taxes, laid in his coals for the winter, and enjoyed health, happiness, and freedom from debt—fresh debt, be it understood—ever since this commission. Going down to Liverpool to hang his work, it was proposed to him by Mr. Lowndes that he should paint a picture of the Duke of Wellington on the field of Waterloo, twenty years after the battle. This was a subject after Haydon's own heart, for the Duke had always been his ideal hero, his king among men. Overflowing with pride and delight, he prays that Providence will so bless this new commission that 'the glorious city of Liverpool may possess the best historical picture, and the grandest effort of my pencil in portraiture. Inspired by history, I fear not making it the grandest thing.'

The Liverpool committee wrote to the Duke, to ask if he would consent to give sittings to Haydon, and received a promise that he would sit for his head as soon as time could be found. Meanwhile, Haydon set to work upon the horse, which was copied from portraits of Copenhagen. While he was thus engaged, D'Orsay called at the studio, and bestowed advice and criticism upon the artist, which, for once, was thankfully received. Haydon relates how D'Orsay 'took my brush in his dandy glove, which made my heart ache, and lowered the hind-quarters by bringing over a bit of the sky. Such a dress! white greatcoat, blue satin cravat, hair oiled and curling, hat of the primest curve, gloves scented with eau-de-Cologne, primrose in tint, skin in tightness. In this prime of dandyism, he took up a nasty, oily, dirty hog-tool, and immortalised Copenhagen by touching the sky. I thought after he was gone, "This won't do—a Frenchman touch Copen-

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hagen!" So out I rubbed all he had touched, and modified his hints myself.'

As there was no chance of the Duke's being able to sit at this time, owing to the pressure of public business, Haydon made a flying visit to Brussels, in order to get local colour for the field of Waterloo. A few weeks later he was overjoyed at receiving an invitation to spend a few days at Walmer, when the Duke promised to give the desired sittings. On October 11, 1839, he went down 'by steam' to Walmer, where he was heartily welcomed by his host. His Journal contains a long and minute account of his visit, from which one or two anecdotes may be quoted. Haydon's fellow-guests were Sir Astley Cooper, Mr. Arbuthnot, and Mr. Booth. The first evening the conversation turned, among other topics, upon the Peninsular War. 'The Duke talked of the want of fuel in Spain—of what the troops suffered, and how whole houses, so many to a division, were pulled down, and paid for, to serve as fuel. He said every Englishman who has a house goes to bed at night. He found bivouacking was not suitable to the character of the English soldier. He got drunk, and lay down under any hedge, and discipline was destroyed. But when he introduced tents, every soldier belonged to his tent, and, drunk or sober, he got to it before he went to sleep. I said, "Your grace, the French always bivouac." "Yes," he replied, "because French, Spanish, and all other nations lie anywhere. It is their habit. They have no homes."'

The next morning, after his return from hunting, the Duke gave a first sitting of an hour and a half. 'I hit his grand, manly, upright expression,' writes Haydon. 'He looked like an eagle of the gods who had put on human shape, and got silvery with age and service. . . .

I found that to imagine he could not go through any duty raised the lion. "Does the light hurt your grace's eyes?" "Not at all," and he stared at the light as much as to say, "I'll see if you shall make me give in, Signor Light." 'Twas a noble head. I saw nothing of that peculiar expression of mouth the sculptors give him, bordering on simpering. His colour was beautiful and fleshy, his lips compressed and energetic.' The next day, being Sunday, there was no sitting, but Haydon was charmed at sharing a pew with his hero, and deeply moved by the simplicity and humility with which he followed the service. 'Arthur Wellesley in the village church of Walmer,' he writes, 'was more interesting to me than at the last charge of the Guards at Waterloo, or in all the glory and paraphernalia of his entry into Paris.'

It is probable that the Duke was afraid of being attacked by Haydon on the burning question of a State grant for the encouragement of historical painting, a subject about which he had received and answered many lengthy letters, for on each evening, when there was no party, he steadily read a newspaper, the *Standard* on Saturday, and the *Spectator* on Sunday, while his guest watched him in silent admiration. On the Monday morning, the hero came in for another sitting, looking extremely worn, his skin drawn tight over his face, his eyes watery and aged, his head slightly nodding. 'How altered from the fresh old man after Saturday's hunting,' says Haydon. 'It affected me. He looked like an aged eagle beginning to totter from its perch.' A second sitting in the afternoon concluded the business, and early next morning Haydon left for town. 'It is curious,' he comments, 'to have known thus the two great heads of

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the two great parties, the Duke and Lord Grey. I prefer the Duke infinitely. He is more manly, has no vanity, is not deluded by any flattery or humbug, and is in every way a grander character, though Lord Grey is a fine, amiable, venerable, vain man.'

During the remainder of the year, Haydon worked steadily, and finished his picture. On December 2 he notes: 'It is now twenty-seven years since I ordered my Solomon canvas. I was young—twenty-six. The whole world was against me. I had not a farthing. Yet I remember the delight with which I mounted my deal table and dashed it in, singing and trusting in God, as I always do. When one is once imbued with that clear heavenly confidence, there is nothing like it. It has carried me through everything. I think my dearest Mary has not got it; I do not think women have in general. Two years ago I had not a farthing, having spent it all to recover her health. She said to me, "What are we to do, my dear?" I replied, "Trust in God." There was something like a smile on her face. The very next day came the order for £400 from Liverpool, and ever since I have been employed.' Alas, poor Mary! who had been chiefly occupied in bearing children and burying them, that must have been rather a melancholy smile upon her faded face.

During the first part of 1840, Haydon seems to have been chiefly engaged in lecturing, the only picture on the stocks being a small replica of his Napoleon Musing for the poet Rogers. In February he was enabled to carry out one of the dreams of his life, namely, the delivery of a series of lectures upon art in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, under the patronage of the Vice-Chancellor. The experiment was a triumphant success, and he

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exclaims, with his usual pious fervour, 'O God, how grateful ought I to be at being permitted the distinction of thus being the first to break down the barrier which has kept art begging to be heard at the Universities.' He describes the occasion as one of the four chief honours of his life, the other three being Wordsworth's sonnet, 'High is our calling,' the freedom of his native town, and a public dinner that was given in his honour at Edinburgh. On March 14 he arrived home, 'full of enthusiasm and expecting (like the Vicar of Wakefield) every blessing—expecting my dear Mary to hang about my neck, and welcome me after my victory; when I found her out, not calculating I should be home till dinner. I then walked into town, and when I returned she was at home, and hurt that I did not wait, so this begat mutual allusions which were anything but loving or happy. So much for anticipations of human happiness!'

On June 12, 1840, Haydon notes: 'Excessively excited and exhausted. I attended the great Convention of the Anti-Slavery Society at Freemasons' Hall. Last Wednesday a deputation called on me from the Committee, saying they wished for a sketch of the scene. The meeting was very affecting. Poor old Clarkson was present, with delegates from America, and other parts of the world.' A few days later, Haydon breakfasted with Clarkson, and sketched him with 'an expression of indignant humanity.' In less than a week fifty heads were dashed in, the picture, when finished, containing no fewer than a hundred and thirty-eight; in fact, as the artist remarked, with a curious disregard of natural history, it was all heads, like a peacock's tail. Haydon took a malicious pleasure in suggesting to his sitters that he

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should place them beside the negro delegate; this being his test of their sincerity. Thus he notes on June 30: 'Scobell called. I said, "I shall place you, Thompson, and the negro together." Now an abolitionist, on thorough principle, would have gloried in being so placed. He sophisticated immediately on the propriety of placing the negro in the distance, as it would have much greater effect. Lloyd Garrison comes to-day. I'll try him, and this shall be my method of ascertaining the real heart. . . . Garrison met me directly. George Thompson said he saw no objection. But that was not enough. A man who wishes to place a negro on a level with himself must no longer regard him as having been a slave, and feel annoyed at sitting by his side.' A visit to Clarkson at Playford Hall, Ipswich, was an interesting experience. Clarkson told the story of his vision, and the midnight voice that said 'You have not done your work. There is America.' Haydon had been a believer all his life in such spiritual communications, and declares, 'I have been so acted on from seventeen to fifty-five, for the purpose of reforming and refining my great country in art.'

In 1841 the Fine Arts Committee appointed to consider the question of the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament, sat to examine witnesses, but Haydon was not summoned before them, a slight which he deeply felt. With an anxious heart he set about making experiments in fresco, and was astonished at what he regarded as his success in this new line of endeavour. During the past year, the Anti-Slavery Convention picture, and one or two small commissions, had kept his head above water, but now the clouds were beginning to gather again, his difficulties being greatly increased by the fact that he had two sons to start in the world. The eldest, Frank,

had been apprenticed, at his own wish, to an engineering firm, but tiring of his chosen profession, he desired to take orders, and, as a university career was considered a necessary preliminary to this course, he was entered at Caius College, Cambridge. The second son, Frederick, Haydon fitted out for the navy, and in order to meet these heavy extra expenses, he was compelled to part with his copyright of the 'Duke at Waterloo' for a wholly inadequate sum.

In the spring of 1842 the Fine Arts Commission issued a notice of the conditions for the cartoon competition, intended to test the capacity of native artists for the decoration of the House of Lords. The joy with which Haydon welcomed this first step towards the object which he had been advocating throughout the whole of his working life, was marred by the painful misgiving that he would not be allowed to share the fruits of victory. When he had first begun his crusade, he had felt himself without a rival in his own branch of art, not one of his contemporaries being able to compete with him in a knowledge of anatomy, in strength of imagination, or in the power of working on a grand scale. But now he was fifty-six years old, there were younger men coming on who had been trained in the principles of his own school, and he was painfully aware that he had made many enemies in high places. Still, in spite of all forebodings, he continued his researches in fresco-painting, and wrote vehement letters to the papers, protesting against the threatened employment of Cornelius and other German artists.

During this year Haydon was working intermittently at two or three large pictures, 'Alexander conquering the Lion,' 'Curtius leaping into the Gulf,' and the 'Siege of

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Saragossa,' for the days were long past when one grand composition occupied him for six years. That the wolf was once again howling at the door is evidenced by the entry for February 6. 'I got up yesterday, after lying awake for several hours with all the old feelings of torture at want of money. A bill coming due of £44 for my boy Frank at Caius. Three commissions for £700 put off till next year. My dear Mary's health broken up. . . . I knew if my debt to the tutor of Caius was not paid, the mind of my son Frank would be destroyed, from his sensitiveness to honour and right. As he is now beating third-year men, I dreaded any check.' In these straits he hastily painted one or two small pot-boilers, borrowed, deferred, pawned his wife's watch, and had the satisfaction of bringing his son home 'crowned as first-prize man in mathematics.' For one who was in the toils of the money-lenders, who was only living from hand to mouth, and who had never made an investment in his life, to give his son a university career, must be regarded, according to individual feeling, either as a proof of presumptuous folly or of childlike trust in Providence.

As soon as his pictures were off his hands, Haydon began his competition cartoons of 'The Curse of Adam and Eve,' and 'The Entry of Edward the Black Prince and King John into London.' He felt that it was beneath his dignity as a painter of recognised standing to compete with young unknown men who had nothing to lose, but in his present necessities the chance of winning one of the money prizes was not to be neglected. In the absence of any lucrative employment he was only able to carry on his work by pawning his lay-figure, and borrowing off his buttermilk. Small wonder that he exclaims: 'The



greatest curse that can befall a father in England is to have a son gifted with a passion and a genius for high art. Thank God with all my soul and all my nature, my children have witnessed the harrowing agonies under which I have ever painted, and the very name of painting, the very thought of a picture, gives them a hideous taste in their mouths. Thank God, not one of my boys, nor my girl, can draw a straight line, even with a ruler, much less without one.'

In the course of this year Haydon began a correspondence with Miss Barrett, afterwards Mrs. Browning, with whom he was never personally acquainted, though he knew her through her poems, and through the allusions to her in the letters of their common friend, Miss Mitford. The paper friendship flourished for a time, and Haydon, who was a keen judge of character, recognised that here was a little Donna Quixote whose chivalry could be depended on in time of trouble. More than once, when threatened with arrest, he sent her paintings and manuscripts, of which she took charge with sublime indifference to the fact that by so doing she might be placing herself within reach of the arm of the law. One of the pictures that were placed in her guardianship was an unfinished portrait of 'Wordsworth musing upon Helvellyn.' Miss Barrett was inspired by this work with the sonnet beginning:

' Wordsworth upon Helvellyn ! Let the cloud  
Ebb audibly along the mountain wind ' ;

and concluding with the fine tribute :

' A vision free  
And noble, Haydon, hath thine art released.  
No portrait this with academic air,  
This is the poet and his poetry.'

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The year 1843 brought, as Haydon's biographer points out, 'the consummation of what he had so earnestly fought for, a competition of native artists to prove their capability for executing great monumental and decorative works; but with this came his own bitter disappointment at not being among the successful competitors. In all his struggles up to this point, Haydon had the consolation of hope that better times were coming. But now the good time for art was at hand, and he was passed over. The blow fell heavily—indeed, I may say, was mortal. He tried to cheat himself into the belief that the old hostile influences to which he attributed all his misfortunes, had been working here also, and that he should yet rise superior to their malice. He would not admit to himself that his powers were impaired—that he was less fit for great achievements in his art than he had been when he painted Solomon and Lazarus. But if he held this opinion, he held it alone. It was apparent to all, even to his warmest friends, that years of harass, humiliation, distraction, and conflict had enfeebled his energies, and led him to seek in exaggeration the effect he could no longer attain by well-measured force. His restless desire to have a hand in all that was projected for art, had wearied those in authority. He had shown himself too intractable to follow, and he had not inspired that confidence which might have given him a right to lead.'

Although Haydon loudly proclaimed his conviction that, in face of the hostility against him, his cartoons would not be successful, even though they were as perfect as Raphael's, yet it is obvious that he had not altogether relinquished hope. In a letter to his old pupil, Eastlake, who was secretary to the Fine Arts Commission, he says :

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‘I appeal to the Royal Commission, to the First Lord, to you the secretary, to Barry the architect, if I ought not to be indulged in my hereditary right to do this, viz., that when the houses are ready, cartoons done, colours mixed, and all at their posts, I shall be allowed, *employed or not employed*, to take the brush, and dip into the *first* colour, and put the *first* touch on the *first* intonaco. If that is not granted, I’ll haunt every noble Lord and you, till you join my disturbed spirit on the banks of the Styx.’

On June 1 Haydon placed his two cartoons in Westminster Hall, and thanked his God that he had lived to see that day, adding with unconscious blasphemy, ‘Spare my life, O Lord, until I have shown thy strength unto this generation, thy power unto that which is to come.’ The miracle for which he had secretly hoped, while declaring his certainty of failure, did not happen. On June 27 he heard from Eastlake that his cartoons were not among those chosen for reward. Half stunned by the blow, anticipated though it had been, he makes but few comments on the news in his Journal, and those are written in a composed and reasonable tone. ‘I went to bed last night in a decent state of anxiety,’ he observes. ‘It has given a great shock to my family, especially to my dear boy, Frank, and revived all the old horrors of arrest, execution, and debt. It is exactly what I expected, and is, I think, intentional. . . . I am wounded, and being ill from confinement, it shook me. (*July 1st*) A day of great misery. I said to my dear love, “I am not included.” Her expression was a study. She said, “We shall be ruined.” I looked up my letters, papers, and Journals, and sent them to my dear Æschylus Barrett. I burnt loads of private letters, and prepared for execu-

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tions. Seven pounds was raised on my daughter's and Mary's dresses.'

The three money prizes were awarded to Armitage, Cope, and Watts, but it was announced that another competition, in fresco, would be held the following year, when the successful competitors would be intrusted with the decoration of the House of Lords. Haydon did not enter for this competition, but, as will presently appear, he refused to allow that he was beaten. On September 4 he removed his cartoons from Westminster Hall, with the comment: 'Thus ends the cartoon contest; and as the very first inventor and beginner of this mode of rousing the people when they were pronounced incapable of relishing refined works of art without colour, I am deeply wounded at the insult inflicted. These Journals witness under what trials I began them—how I called on my Creator for His blessing—how I trusted in Him, and how I have been degraded, insulted, and harassed. O Lord! Thou knowest best. I submit.'

During the year Haydon had finished his picture of 'Alexander and the Lion,' which he considered one of his finest works, though the British Gallery declined to hang it, and no patron offered to buy it. He had also painted for bread and cheese innumerable small replicas of 'Napoleon at St. Helena' and the 'Duke at Waterloo' for five guineas apiece. By the beginning of 1844 his spirits had outwardly revived, thanks to the anodyne of incessant labour, and he writes almost in the old buoyant vein: 'Another day of work, God be thanked! Put in the sea [in "Napoleon at St. Helena"]; a delicious tint. How exquisite is a bare canvas, sized alone, to work on; how the slightest colour, thin as water, tells; how it glitters in body; how the brush flies—now here—now there; it

seems as if face, hands, sky, thought, poetry, and expression were hid in the handle, and streamed out as it touched the canvas. What magic! what fire! what unerring hand and eye! what power! what a gift of God! I bow, and am grateful.' On March 24 he came to the fatal decision to paint his own original designs for the House of Lords in a series of six large pictures, and exhibit them separately, a decision founded, as he believed, on supernatural inspiration. 'Awoke this morning,' he writes, 'with that sort of audible whisper Socrates, Columbus, and Tasso heard! "Why do you not paint your own designs for the House on your own foundation, and exhibit them?" I felt as if there was no chance of my ever being permitted to do them else, without control also. I knelt up in my bed, and prayed heartily to accomplish them, whatever might be the obstruction. I will begin them as my next great works; I feel as if they will be my last, and I think I shall then have done my duty. O God! bless the beginning, progression, and conclusion of these six great designs to illustrate the best government to regulate without cramping the energies of mankind.'

In July the frescoes sent in for competition were exhibited in Westminster Hall, and in the result six artists were commissioned to decorate the House of Lords, Maclise, Redgrave, Dyce, Cope, Horsley, and Thomas. 'I see,' writes Haydon, 'they are resolved that I, the originator of the whole scheme, shall have nothing to do with it; so I will (trusting in the great God who has brought me thus far) begin on my own inventions without employment.' The first of the series was 'Aristides hooted by the Populace,' and the conditions under which it was painted are described in his annual review of the year's

work: 'I have painted a large Napoleon in four days and a half, six smaller different subjects, three Curtiuses, five Napoleons Musing, three Dukes and Copenhagens, George iv., and the Duke at Waterloo—half done Uriel—published my lectures—and settled composition of Aristides. I gave lectures at Liverpool, sometimes twice a day, and lectured at the Royal Institution. I have not been idle, but how much more I might have done!'

In 1845 Haydon exhibited his picture of 'Uriel and Satan' at the Academy, and 'after twenty-two years of abuse,' actually received a favourable notice in the *Times*. For the Uriel he was paid £200, but five other pictures remained upon his hands, their estimated value amounting to nearly a thousand pounds, and he was left to work at his Aristides with barely ten shillings for current expenses, and not a single commission in prospect. 'What a pity it is,' he observes, 'that a man of my order—sincerity, perhaps genius [in the *Journal* a private note is here inserted, "not *perhaps*"], is not employed. What honour, what distinction would I not confer on my great country! However, it is my destiny to perform great things, not in consequence of encouragement, but in spite of opposition, and so let it be.' In the latter part of the year came one or two minor pieces of good fortune for which Haydon professed the profoundest gratitude, declaring that he was not good enough to deserve such blessings. The King of Hanover bought a Napoleon for £200, and a pupil came, who paid a like sum as premium. His son, Frank, who had taken his degree, changed his mind again about his profession, and now 'shrank from the publicity of the pulpit.' Haydon applied to Sir Robert Peel for an appointment for the youth, and Peel, who seems to have shown the utmost patience and kindness in his

relations with the unfortunate artist, at once offered a post in the Record Office at £80 a year, an offer which was gladly accepted.

Thus relieved of immediate care, Haydon set to work on the second picture of his series, 'Nero playing the Lyre while Rome was burning.' The effect of his conception, as he foresaw it in his mind's eye, was so terrific that he 'fluttered, trembled, and perspired like a woman, and was obliged to sit down.' Under all the anxiety, the pressure, and the disappointment of Haydon's life, it must be remembered that there were enormous compensations in the shape of days and hours of absorbed and satisfied employment, days and hours such as seldom fall to the lot of the average good citizen and solvent householder. The following entry alone is sufficient proof that Haydon, even in his worst straits, was almost as much an object of envy as of compassion: 'Worked with such intense abstraction and delight for eight hours, with five minutes only for lunch, that though living in the noisiest quarter of all London, I never remember hearing all day a single cart, carriage, knock, cry, bark of man, woman, dog, or child. When I came out into the sunshine I said to myself, "Why, what is all this driving about?" though it has always been so for the last twenty-two years, so perfectly, delightfully, and intensely had I been abstracted. If that be not happiness, what is?'

Haydon had now staked all his hopes upon the exhibition in the spring of 1846 of the first two pictures in his series, 'Aristides' and 'Nero.' If the public flocked to see them, if it accorded him, as he expected, its enthusiastic support, he hoped that the Commission would be shamed into offering him public employment. If, on the other hand, the exhibition failed, he must have realised

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that he would be irretrievably ruined, with all his hopes for the future slain. Everything was to be sacrificed to this last grand effort. 'If I lose this moment for showing all my works,' he writes, 'it can never occur again. My fate hangs on doing as I ought, and seizing moments with energy. I shall never again have the opportunity of connecting myself with a great public commission by opposition, and interesting the public by the contrast. If I miss it, it will be a tide not taken at the flood.'

By dint of begging and borrowing, the money was scraped together for the opening expenses of the exhibition, and Haydon composed a sensational descriptive advertisement in the hope of attracting the public. The private view was on April 4, when it rained all day, and only four old friends attended. On April 6, Easter Monday, the public was admitted, but only twenty-one availed themselves of the privilege. For a few days Haydon went on hoping against hope that matters would improve, and that John Bull, in whose support he had trusted, would rally round him at last. But Tom Thumb was exhibiting next door, and the historical painter had no chance against the pigmy. The people rushed by in their thousands to visit Tom Thumb, but few stopped to inspect 'Aristides' or 'Nero.' 'They push, they fight, they scream, they faint,' writes Haydon, 'they see my bills, my boards, my caravans, and don't read them. Their eyes are open, but their sense is shut. It is an insanity, a rabies, a madness, a furor, a dream. Tom Thumb had 12,000 people last week, B. R. Haydon 133½ (the half a little girl). Exquisite taste of the English people! . . . (*May 18th*) I closed my exhibition this day, and lost £111, 8s. 10d. No man can accuse me of showing less energy, less spirit,



less genius than I did twenty-six years ago. I have not decayed, but the people have been corrupted. I am the same, they are not; and I have suffered in consequence.'

In defiance of this shipwreck of all his hopes, and the heavy liabilities that hung about his neck, this indomitable spirit began the third picture of his unappreciated series, 'Alfred and the First British Jury.' He had large sums to pay in the coming month, and only a few shillings in the house, with no commissions in prospect. He sends up passionate and despairing petitions that God will help him in his dreadful necessities, will raise him friends from sources invisible, and enable him to finish his last and greatest works. Appeals for help to Lord Brougham, the Duke of Beaufort, and Sir Robert Peel brought only one response, a cheque for £50 from Peel, which was merely a drop in the ocean. Day by day went by, and still no commissions came in, no offers for any of the large pictures he had on hand. Haydon began to lose confidence in his ability to finish his series, and with him loss of self-confidence was a fatal sign. The June weather was hot, he was out of health, and unable to sleep at night, but he declined to send for a doctor. His brain grew confused, and at last even the power to work, that power which for him had spelt pride and happiness throughout his whole life, seemed to be leaving him.

On June 16 he writes: 'I sat from two till five staring at my picture like an idiot, my brain pressed down by anxiety, and the anxious looks of my dear Mary and the children. . . . Dearest Mary, with a woman's passion, wishes me at once to stop payment, and close the whole thing. I will not. I will finish my six under the blessing of God, reduce my expenses, and hope His mercy will not desert me, but bring me through in health and

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vigour, gratitude and grandeur of soul, to the end.' The end was nearer than he thought, for even Haydon's brave spirit could not battle for ever with adverse fate, and the collapse, when it came, was sudden. The last two or three entries in the Journal are melancholy reading.

'*June 18.*—O God, bless me through the evils of this day. My landlord, Newton, called. I said, "I see a quarter's rent in thy face, but none from me." I appointed to-morrow night to see him, and lay before him every iota of my position. Good-hearted Newton! I said, "Don't put in an execution." "Nothing of the sort," he replied, half hurt. I sent the Duke, Wordsworth, dear Fred and Mary's heads to Miss Barrett to protect. I have the Duke's boots and hat, Lord Grey's coat, and some more heads.

'*20th.*—O God, bless us through all the evils of this day. Amen.

'*21st.*—Slept horribly. Prayed in sorrow, and got up in agitation.

'*22nd.*—God forgive me. Amen.

FINIS

OF

B. R. HAYDON.

' "Stretch me no longer on this rough world"—*Lear.*'

This last entry was made between ten and eleven o'clock on the morning of June 22. Haydon had risen early, and gone out to a gunmaker's in Oxford Street, where he bought a pair of pistols. After breakfast, he asked his wife to go and spend the day with an old friend, and having affectionately embraced her, shut himself in his painting-room. Mrs. Haydon left the house,

and an hour later Miss Haydon went down to the studio, intending to try and console her father in his anxieties. She found him stretched on the floor in front of his unfinished picture of 'Alfred and the First Jury,' a bullet-wound in his head, and a frightful gash across his throat. A razor and a small pistol lay by his side. On the table were his Journal, open at the last page, letters to his wife and children, his will, made that morning, and a paper headed: 'Last thoughts of B. R. Haydon; half-past ten.' These few lines, with their allusions to Wellington and Napoleon, are characteristic of the man who had painted the two great soldiers a score of times, and looked up to them as his heroes and exemplars.

'No man should use certain evil for probable good, however great the object,' so they run. 'Evil is the prerogative of the Deity. Wellington never used evil if the good was not certain. Napoleon had no such scruples, and I fear the glitter of his genius rather dazzled me. But had I been encouraged, nothing but good would have come from me, because when encouraged I paid everybody. God forgive me the evil for the sake of the good. Amen.'

This tragic conclusion to a still more tragic career created a profound sensation in society, and immense crowds followed the historical painter to his grave. Among all his friends, perhaps few were more affected by his death than one who had never looked upon his face—his 'dear Æschylus Barrett,' as he called her. Certain it is that, with the intuition of genius, Elizabeth Barrett understood, appreciated, and made allowances for the unhappy man more completely than was possible to any other of his contemporaries. Clear-sighted to his faults and weaknesses, her chivalrous spirit took up arms in defence of his conduct, even against the strictures of her poet-

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lover. 'The dreadful death of poor Mr. Haydon the artist,' she wrote to her friend Mrs. Martin, a few days after the event, 'has quite upset me. I thank God that I never saw him—poor gifted Haydon. . . . No artist is left behind with equal largeness of poetical conception. If the hand had always obeyed the soul, he would have been a genius of the first order. As it is, he lived on the *slope* of genius, and could not be steadfast and calm. His life was one long agony of self-assertion. Poor, poor Haydon! See how the world treats those who try too openly for its gratitude. "Tom Thumb for ever" over the heads of its giants.'

'Could any one—*could my own hand even have averted what has happened?*' she wrote to Robert Browning on June 24, 1846. 'My head and heart have ached to-day over the inactive hand. But for the moment it was out of my power, and then I never fancied this case to be more than a piece of a continuous case, of a habit fixed. Two years ago he sent me boxes and pictures precisely so, and took them back again—poor, poor Haydon!—as he will not this time. . . . Also, I have been told again and again (oh, never by *you*, my beloved) that to give money *there*, was to drop it into a hole in the ground. But if to have dropped it so, dust to dust, would have saved a living man—what then? . . . Some day, when I have the heart to look for it, you shall see his last note. I understand now that there are touches of desperate pathos—but never could he have meditated self-destruction while writing that note. He said he should write six more lectures—six more volumes. He said he was painting a new background to a picture which made him feel as if his soul had wings . . . and he repeated an old phrase of his, which I had heard from him often before,

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and which now rings hollowly to the ears of my memory—that he *couldn't and wouldn't die*. Strange and dreadful !'

Directly after Haydon's death a public meeting of his friends and patrons was held, at which a considerable sum was subscribed for the benefit of his widow and daughter. Sir Robert Peel, besides sending immediate help, recommended the Queen to bestow a small pension on Mrs. Haydon. The dead man's debts amounted to £3000, and his assets consisted chiefly of unsalable pictures, on most of which his creditors had liens. In his will was a clause to the effect that 'I have manuscripts and memoirs in the possession of Miss Barrett, of 50 Wimpole Street, in a chest, which I wish Longman to be consulted about. My memoirs are to 1820 ; my journals will supply the rest. The style, the individuality of Richardson, which I wish not curtailed by an editor.' Miss Mitford was asked to edit the *Life*, but felt herself unequal to the task, which was finally intrusted to Mr. Tom Taylor.

Haydon's *Memoirs*, compiled from his autobiography, journals, and correspondence, appeared in 1853, the same year that saw the publication of Lord John Russell's *Life of Thomas Moore*. To the great astonishment of both critics and public, Haydon's story proved the more interesting of the two. 'Haydon's book is the work of the year,' writes Miss Mitford. 'It has entirely stopped the sale of Moore's, which really might have been written by a Court newspaper or a Court milliner.' Again, the *Athenæum*, a more impartial witness, asks, 'Who would have thought that the *Life* of Haydon would turn out a more sterling and interesting addition to English biography than the *Life* of Moore?' But the highest testimony to the merits of the book as a human document

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comes from Mrs. Browning, who wrote to Miss Mitford on March 19, 1854, 'Oh, I have just been reading poor Haydon's biography. There is tragedy! The pain of it one can hardly shake off. Surely, surely, wrong was done somewhere, when the worst is admitted of Haydon. For himself, looking forward beyond the grave, I seem to understand that all things, when most bitter, worked ultimate good to him, for that sublime arrogance of his would have been fatal perhaps to the moral nature, if further developed by success. But for the nation we had our duties, and we should not suffer our teachers and originators to sink thus. It is a book written in blood of the heart. Poor Haydon!' Mr. Taylor's *Life* was supplemented in 1874 by Haydon's *Correspondence and Table-talk*, together with a *Memoir* written in a tone of querulous complaint, by his second son, Frederick, who, it may be noted, had been dismissed from the public service for publishing a letter to Mr. Gladstone, entitled *Our Officials at the Home Office*, and who died in the Bethlehem Hospital in 1886. His elder brother, Frank, committed suicide in 1887.

On the subject of Haydon's merits as a painter the opinion of his contemporaries swung from one extreme to another, while that of posterity perhaps has scarcely allowed him such credit as was his due. It is certain that he was considered a youth of extraordinary promise by his colleagues, Wilkie, Jackson, and Sir George Beaumont, yet there were not wanting critics who declared that his early picture, 'Dentatus,' was an absurd mass of vulgarity and distortion. Foreign artists who visited his studio urged him to go to Rome, where he was assured that patrons and pupils would flock round him; while, on the other hand, he was described by a native critic (in

the *Quarterly Review*) as one of the most defective painters of the day, who had received more pecuniary assistance, more indulgence, more liberality, and more charity than any other artist ever heard of. But the best criticism of his powers, though it scarcely takes into account the gift of imagination which received so many tributes from the poets, is that contributed to Mr. Taylor's biography by Mr. Watts, R.A.

'The characteristics of Haydon's art,' he writes, 'appear to me to be great determination and power, knowledge, and effrontery. . . . Haydon appears to have succeeded as often as he displays any real anxiety to do so; but one is struck with the extraordinary discrepancy of different parts of the work, as though, bored by a fixed attention that had taken him out of himself, yet highly applauding the result, he had scrawled and daubed his brush about in a sort of intoxication of self-glory. . . . In Haydon's work there is not sufficient forgetfulness of self to disarm criticism of personality. His pictures are themselves autobiographical notes of the most interesting kind; but their want of beauty repels, and their want of modesty exasperates. Perhaps their principal characteristic is lack of delicacy and refinement of execution.' While describing Haydon's touch as woolly, his surfaces as disagreeable, and his draperies as deficient in dignity, Mr. Watts admits that his expression of anatomy and general perception of form are the best by far that can be found in the English school. Haydon had looked forward in full confidence to the favourable verdict of posterity, and to an honourable position in the National Gallery for the big canvases that had been neglected by his contemporaries. It is not the least of life's little ironies that while not a single work of his now hangs in

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the National Gallery, his large picture of 'Curtius leaping into the Gulf' occupies a prominent position in one of Gatti's restaurants.<sup>1</sup>

As a lecturer, a theoriser, and a populariser of his art, Haydon has just claims to grateful remembrance. Though driven to paint pot-boilers for the support of his family, he never ceased to preach the gospel of high art; he was among the first to recognise and acclaim the transcendent merits of the Elgin Marbles; he rejoiced with a personal joy in the purchase of the Angerstein collection as the nucleus of a National Gallery; he scorned the ignoble fears of some of his colleagues lest the newly-started winter exhibitions of old masters should injure their professional prospects; he used his interest at Court to have Raphael's cartoons brought up to London for the benefit of students and public; he advocated the establishment of local schools of design, and, through his lectures and writings, helped to raise and educate the taste of his country.

Haydon has painted his own character and temperament in such vivid colours, that scarcely a touch need be added to the portrait. He was an original thinker, a vigorous writer, a keen observer, but from his youth up a disproportion was evident in the structure of his mind, that pointed only too clearly to insanity. His judgment, as Mr. Taylor observes, was essentially unsound in all matters where he himself was personally interested. His vanity blinded him throughout to the quality of his own work, the amount of influence he could wield, and the

<sup>1</sup> Three of Haydon's pictures, however, are the property of the nation. Two, the 'Lazarus' and 'May-day,' belong to the National Gallery, but have been lent to provincial galleries. One, the 'Christ in the Garden,' belongs to the South Kensington Museum, but has been stored away.



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extent of the public sympathy that he excited. He was essentially religious in temperament, though his religion was so assertive and egotistical in type that those who hold with Rosalba that where there is no modesty there can be no religion,<sup>1</sup> might be inclined to deny its existence. From the very outset of his career Haydon took up the attitude of a missionary of high art in England—and therewith the expectation of being crowned and enriched as its Priest and King. He clung to the belief that a man who devoted himself to the practice of a high and ennobling art ought to be supported by a grateful country, or at least by generous patrons, and he could never be made to realise that Art is a stern and jealous mistress, who demands material sacrifices from her votaries in exchange for spiritual compensations. If a man desires to create a new era in the art of his country, he must be prepared to lead a monastic life in a garret; but if, like Haydon, he allows himself a wife and eight children, and professes to be unable to live on five hundred a year, he must condescend to the painting of portraits and pot-boilers. The public cannot be forced to support what it neither understands nor admires, and, in a democratic state, the Government is bound to consult the taste of its masters.

Haydon's financial embarrassments were perhaps the least of his trials. As has been seen, he had fallen into the hands of the money-lenders in early youth, and he had never been able to extricate himself from their clutches. But so many of his friends and colleagues—Godwin, Leigh Hunt, and Sir Thomas Lawrence among others—were in the same position, that Haydon must

<sup>1</sup> Rosalba said of Sir Godfrey Kneller, 'This man can have no religion, for he has no modesty.'

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have felt he was insolvent in excellent company. As long as he was able to keep himself out of prison and the bailiffs out of his house, he seems to have considered that his affairs were positively flourishing, and at their worst his financial difficulties alone would never have driven him to self-destruction. Mrs. Browning was surely right when she wrote:—‘The more I think the more I am inclined to conclude that the money irritation was merely an additional irritation, and that the despair, leading to revolt against life, had its root in disappointed ambition. The world did not recognise his genius, and he punished the world by withdrawing the light. . . . All the audacity and bravery and self-calculation, which drew on him so much ridicule, were an agony in disguise—he could not live without reputation, and he wrestled for it, struggled for it, *kicked* for it, forgetting grace of attitude in the pang. When all was vain he went mad and died. . . . Poor Haydon! Think what an agony life was to him, so constituted!—his own genius a clinging curse! the fire and the clay in him seething and quenching one another!—the man seeing maniacally in all men the assassins of his fame! and with the whole world against him, struggling for the thing that was his life, through day and night, in thoughts and in dreams . . . struggling, stifling, breaking the hearts of the creatures dearest to him, in the conflict for which there was no victory, though he could not choose but fight it. Tell me if Laocoön’s anguish was not as an infant’s sleep compared to this.’

Haydon wrote his own epitaph, and this, which he, at least, believed to be an accurate summary of his misfortunes and their cause, may fitly close this brief outline of his troubled life:—

# BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON

‘ HERE

LIETH THE BODY

OF

BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON,

An English Historical Painter, who, in a struggle to make the People, the Legislature, the Nobility, and the Sovereign of England give due dignity and rank to the highest Art, which has ever languished, and, until the Government interferes, ever will languish in England, fell a Victim to his ardour and his love of country, an evidence that to seek the benefit of your country by telling the Truth to Power, is a crime that can only be expiated by the ruin and destruction of the Man who is so patriotic and so imprudent.

‘ He was born at Plymouth, 26th of January 1786, and died on the [22nd of June] 18[46], believing in Christ as the Mediator and Advocate of Mankind :—

‘ “ What various ills the Painter’s life assail,  
Pride, Envy, Want, the Patron and the Jail.” ’



**LADY MORGAN**  
**(SYDNEY OWENSON)**







*Sydney Owenson!*  
*afterwards*  
*Lady Morgan.*  
*From a drawing by Sir Thomas Lawrence.*

*Art. Hobbs & Co.*







# LADY MORGAN

(SYDNEY OWENSON)

## PART I

‘WHAT,’ asks Lady Morgan in her fragment of autobiography, ‘what has a woman to do with dates? Cold, false, erroneous dates! Her poetical idiosyncrasy, calculated by epochs, would make the most natural points of reference in a woman’s autobiography.’ The matter-of-fact Saxon would hardly know how to set about calculating a poetical idiosyncrasy by epochs, but our Celtic heroine was equal to the task; at any rate, she abstained so carefully throughout her career from all unnecessary allusion to what she called ‘vulgar eras,’ that the date of her birth remained a secret, even from her bitterest enemies. Her untiring persecutor, John Wilson Croker, declared that Sydney Owenson was born in 1775, while the *Dictionary of National Biography* more gallantly gives the date as 1783, with a query. But as Sir Charles Morgan was born in the latter year, and as his wife owned to a few years’ seniority, we shall probably be doing her no injustice if we place the important event between 1778 and 1780.

Lady Morgan’s detestation for dates was accompanied by a vivid imagination, an inaccurate memory, and a

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constitutional inability to deal with hard facts. Hence, her biographers have found it no easy task to grapple with the details of her career, her own picturesque, high-coloured narrative being not invariably in accord with the prosaic records gathered from contemporary sources. For example, according to the plain, unvarnished statement of a Saxon chronicler, Lady Morgan's father was one Robert MacOwen, who was born in 1744, the son of poor parents in Connaught. He was educated at a hedge-school, and on coming to man's estate, obtained a situation as steward to a neighbouring landowner. But, having been inspired with an unquenchable passion for the theatre, he presently threw up his post, and through the influence of Goldsmith, a 'Connaught cousin,' he obtained a footing on the English stage.

The Celtic version of this story, as dictated by Lady Morgan in her old age, is immeasurably superior, and at any rate deserves to be true. Early in the eighteenth century, so runs the tale, a hurling-match was held in Connaught, which was attended by all the gentry of the neighbourhood. The Queen of Beauty, who gave away the prizes, was Sydney Crofton Bell, granddaughter of Sir Malby Crofton of Longford House. The victor of the hurling-match was Walter MacOwen, a gentleman according to the genealogy of Connaught, but a farmer by position. Young, strong, and handsome, MacOwen, like Orlando, overthrew more than his enemies, with the result that presently there was an elopement in the neighbourhood, and an unpardonable *mésalliance* in the Crofton family. The marriage does not appear to have been a very happy one, since MacOwen continued to frequent all the fairs and hurling-matches of the country-side, but his wife consoled herself for his neglect by cultivating her musical

and poetical gifts. She composed Irish songs and melodies, and gained the title of Clasagh-na-Vallagh, or Harp of the Valley. Her only son Robert inherited his father's good looks and his mother's artistic talents, and was educated by the joint efforts of the Protestant clergyman and the Roman Catholic priest.

When the boy was about seventeen, a rich, eccentric stranger named Blake arrived to take possession of the Castle of Ardfry. The new-comer, who was a musical amateur, presently discovered that there was a young genius in the neighbourhood. Struck by the beauty of Robert MacOwen's voice, Mr. Blake offered to take the youth into his own household, and educate him for a liberal profession, an offer that was joyfully accepted by Clasagh-na-Vallagh. The patron soon tired of Connaught, and carried off his *protégé* to London, where he placed him under Dr. Worgan, the famous blind organist of Westminster Abbey. At home, young MacOwen's duties were to keep his employer's accounts, to carve at table, and to sing Irish melodies to his guests. He was taken up by his distant kinsman, Goldsmith, who introduced him to the world behind the scenes, and encouraged him in his aspirations after a theatrical career.

Among the young Irishman's new acquaintances was Madame Weichsel, *prima donna* of His Majesty's Theatre, and mother of the more celebrated Mrs. Billington. The lady occasionally studied her rôles under Dr. Worgan, when MacOwen played the part of stage-lover, and, being of an inflammable disposition, speedily developed into a real one. This love-affair was the cause of a sudden reverse of fortune. During Mr. Blake's absence from town, Robert accompanied Madame Weichsel to

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Vauxhall, where she was engaged to sing a duet. Her professional colleague failing to appear, young MacOwen was persuaded to undertake the tenor part, which he did with pronounced success. But unfortunately Mr. Blake, who had returned unexpectedly from Ireland, was among the audience, and was angered beyond all forgiveness by this premature *début*. When Robert went home, he found his trunks ready packed, and a letter of dismissal from his patron awaiting him. A note for £300, which accompanied the letter, was returned, and the prodigal drove off to his cousin Goldsmith, who, with characteristic good-nature, took him in, and promised him his interest with the theatrical managers.

According to Lady Morgan's account, Robert Owenson, as he now called himself in deference to the prevailing prejudice against both the Irish and the Scotch, was at once introduced to Garrick, and allowed to make his *début* in the part of Tamerlane. But, from contemporary evidence, it is clear that he had gained some experience in the provinces before he made his first appearance on the London boards, when his Tamerlane was a decided failure. Garrick refused to allow him a second chance, but after further provincial touring, he obtained another London engagement, and appeared with success in such parts as Captain Macheath, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, and Major O'Flaherty.

Owenson had been on the stage some years when he fell in love with Miss Jane Hill, the daughter of a respectable burgess of Shrewsbury. The worthy Mr. Hill refused his consent to his daughter's marriage with an actor, but the dashing *jeune premier*, like his father before him, carried off his bride by night, and married

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her at Lichfield before her irate parent could overtake them. Miss Hill was a Methodist by persuasion, and hated the theatre, though she loved her player. She induced her husband to renounce his profession for a time, and to appear only at concerts and oratorios. But the stage-fever was in his blood, and after a short retirement, we find him, in 1771, investing a part of his wife's fortune in a share in the Crow Street Theatre, Dublin, where he made his first appearance with great success in his favourite part of Major O'Flaherty, one of the characters in Cumberland's comedy, *The West Indian*. He remained one of the pillars of this theatre until 1782, when Ryder, the patentee, became a bankrupt. Owenson was then engaged by Richard Daly to perform at the Smock Alley Theatre, and also to fill the post of assistant-manager.

By this time Sydney had made her appearance in the world, arriving on Christmas Day in some unspecified year. According to one authority she was born on ship-board during the passage from Holyhead to Dublin, but she tells us herself that she was born at her father's house in Dublin during a Christmas banquet, at which most of the leading wits and literary celebrities of the capital were present. The whole party was bidden to her christening a month later, and Edward Lysaght, equally famous as a lawyer and an improvisatore, undertook to make the necessary vows in her name. In spite of this brilliant send-off, Sydney was not destined to bring good fortune to her father's house. A few years after her birth Owenson, having quarrelled with Daly, invested his savings in a tumble-down building known as the Old Music Hall, which he restored, and re-named the National Theatre. The season opened with a grand

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national performance, and everything promised well, when, like a bomb-shell, came the announcement that the Government had granted to Richard Daly an exclusive patent for the performance of legitimate drama in Dublin. Mr. Owenson was thus obliged to close his theatre at the end of his first season, but he received some compensation for his losses, and was offered a re-engagement under Daly on favourable terms, an offer which he had the sense to accept.

A short period of comparative calm and freedom from embarrassment now set in for the Owenson family. Mrs. Owenson was a careful mother, and extremely anxious about the education of her two little girls, Sydney and Olivia. There is a touch of pathos in the picture of the prim, methodistical English lady, who hated the dirt and slovenliness of her husband's people, was shocked at their jovial ways and free talk, looked upon all Papists as connections of Antichrist, and hoped for the salvation of mankind through the form of religion patronised by Lady Huntingdon. She was accustomed to hold up as an example to her little girls the career of a certain model child, the daughter of a distant kinsman, Sir Rowland Hill of Shropshire. This appalling infant had read the Bible twice through before she was five, and knitted all the stockings worn by her father's coachman. The lively Sydney detested the memory of her virtuous young kinswoman, for she had great difficulty in mastering the art of reading, though she learned easily by heart, and could imitate almost anything she saw. At a very early age she could go through the whole elaborate process of hair-dressing, from the first papillote to the last puff of the powder-machine, and amused herself by arranging her father's old wigs in one of the windows, under



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the inscription, 'Sydney Owenson, System, Tête, and Peruke Maker.'

Mr. Owenson found his friends among all the wildest wits of Dublin, but his wife's society was strictly limited, both at the Old Music Hall, part of which had been utilised as a dwelling, and at the country villa that her husband had taken for her at Drumcondra. Yet she does not appear to have permitted her religious prejudices to interfere with her social relaxations, since her three chief intimates at this time were the Rev. Charles Macklin (nephew of the actor), a great performer on the Irish pipes, who had been dismissed from his curacy for playing out the congregation on his favourite instrument; a Methodist preacher who had come over on one of Lady Huntingdon's missions; and a Jesuit priest, who, his order being proscribed in Ireland, was living in concealment, and in want, it was believed, of the necessities of life. These three regularly frequented the Old Music Hall, where points of faith were freely discussed, Mrs. Owenson holding the position of Protestant Pope in the little circle. In order that the discussions might not be unprofitable, the Catholic servants were sometimes permitted to stand at the door, and gather up the crumbs of theological wisdom.

Female visitors were few, one of the most regular being a younger sister of Oliver Goldsmith, who lived with a grocer brother in a little shop which was afterwards occupied by the father of Thomas Moore. Miss Goldsmith was a plain, little old lady, who always carried a long tin case, containing a rouleaux of Dr. Goldsmith's portraits, which she offered for sale. Sydney much preferred her father's friends, more especially his musical associates, such as Giordani the composer, and Fisher the

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violinist, who spent most of their time at his house during their visits to Dublin. The children used to hide under the table to hear them make music, and picked up many melodies by ear. When Mr. Owenson was asked why he did not cultivate his daughter's talent, he replied, 'If I were to cultivate their talent for music, it might induce them some day to go upon the stage, and I would rather buy them a sieve of black cockles to cry about the streets of Dublin than see them the first *prima donnas* of Europe.'

The little Owensons possessed one remarkable play-fellow in the shape of Thomas Dermody, the 'wonderful boy,' who was regarded in Dublin as a second Chatterton. A poor scholar, the son of a drunken country school-master, who turned him adrift at fourteen, Dermody had wandered up to Dublin, paying his way by reciting poetry and telling stories to his humble entertainers, with a few tattered books, one shirt, and two shillings for all his worldly goods. He first found employment as 'librarian' at a cobbler's stall, on which a few cheap books were exposed for sale. Later, he got employment as assistant to the scene-painter at the Theatre Royal, and here he wrote a clever poem on the leading performers, which found its way into the green-room. Anxious to see the author, the company, Owenson amongst them, invaded the painting-room, where they found the boy-poet, clad in rags, his hair clotted with glue, his face smeared with paint, a pot of size in one hand and a brush in the other. The sympathy of the kind-hearted players was aroused, and it was decided that something must be done for youthful genius in distress. Owenson invited the boy to his house, and, by way of testing his powers, set him to write a poetical theme on the subject of Dublin

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University. In less than three-quarters of an hour the prodigy returned with a poem of fifty lines, which showed an intimate acquaintance with the history of the university from its foundation. A second test having been followed by equally satisfactory results, it was decided that a sum of money should be raised by subscriptions, and that Dermody should be assisted to enter the university. Owenson, with his wife's cordial consent, took the young poet into his house, and treated him like his own son. Unfortunately, Dermody's genius was weighted by the artistic temperament; he was lazy, irregular in his attendance at college, and not particularly grateful to his benefactors. By his own acts he fell out of favour, the subscriptions that had been collected were returned to the donors, and his career would have come to an abrupt conclusion, if it had not been that Owenson made interest for him with Lady Moira, a distinguished patron of literature, who placed him in the charge of Dr. Boyd, the translator of Dante. Dermody must have had his good points, for he was a favourite with Mrs. Owenson, and the dear friend of Sydney and Olivia, whom he succeeded in teaching to read and write, a task in which all other preceptors had failed.

In 1788 Mrs. Owenson died rather suddenly, and the home was broken up. Sydney and Olivia were at once placed at a famous Huguenot school, which had originally been established at Portarlinton, but was now removed to Clontarf, near Dublin. For the next three years the children had the benefit of the best teaching that could then be obtained, and were subjected to a discipline which Lady Morgan always declared was the most admirable ever introduced into a 'female seminary' in any country. Sydney soon became popular

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among her fellows, thanks to her knowledge of Irish songs and dances, and it is evident that her schooldays were among the happiest and most healthful of her early life. The school was an expensive one, and poor Owenson, who, with all his faults, seems to have been a careful and affectionate father, found it no easy matter to pay for the many 'extras.'

'I remember once,' writes Lady Morgan, 'our music-teacher complained to my father of our idleness as he sat beside us at the piano, and we stumbled through the overture to *Artaxerxes*. His answer to her complaint was simple and graphic—for, drawing up the sleeve of a handsome surtout, he showed the threadbare sleeve of the black coat beneath, and said, touching the whitened seams, "I should not be driven to the subterfuge of wearing a greatcoat this hot weather to conceal the poverty of my dress beneath, if it were not that I wish to give you the advantage of such instruction as you are now neglecting."' The shaft went home, and the music-mistress had no occasion to complain again.

After three years the headmistress retired on her fortune, the school was given up, and the two girls were placed at what they considered a very inferior establishment in Dublin. Here, however, they had the delight of seeing their father every Sunday, when the widower, leaving the attractions of the city behind, took his little daughters out walking with him. To this time belong memories of early visits to the theatre, where Sydney saw Mrs. Siddons for the first and last time, and Miss Farren as Susan in the *Marriage of Figaro*, just before her own marriage to Lord Derby. During the summer seasons Mr. Owenson toured round the provinces, and generally took his daughters with him, who seem to

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have been made much of by the neighbouring county families.

In 1794 the too optimistic Owenson unfortunately took it into his head that it would be an excellent speculation to build a summer theatre at Kilkenny. Lord Ormond, who took an interest in the project, gave a piece of land opposite the castle gates, money was borrowed, the theatre quickly built, and performers brought at great expense from Dublin. During the summer the house was filled nightly by overflowing audiences, and everything promised well, when the attorney who held a mortgage on the building, foreclosed, and bills to an enormous amount were presented. Mr. Owenson suddenly departed for the south of Ireland, having been advised to keep out of the way until after the final meeting of his creditors. His two daughters were placed in Dublin lodgings under the care of their faithful old servant, Molly Atkins, until their school should reopen.

Sydney had been requested to write to her father every day, and as she was passionately fond, to quote her own words, of writing about anything to any one, she willingly obeyed, trusting to chance for franks. Some of these youthful epistles were preserved by old Molly, the packet being indorsed on the cover, 'Letters from Miss Sydney Owenson to her father, God pity her!' But the young lady evidently did not consider herself an object of pity, for she writes in the best of spirits about the books she is reading, the people she is meeting, and all the little gaieties and excitements of her life. Somebody lends her an *Essay on the Human Understanding*, by Mr. Locke, Gent., whose theories she has no difficulty in understanding; and somebody else talks to her about chemistry (a word she has never heard at school), and

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declares that her questions are so *suggestive* (another new word) that she might become a second Pauline Lavosier. She puts her new knowledge to practical effect by writing with a piece of phosphorus on her bedroom wall, 'Molly, beware!' with the result that Molly is frightened out of her wits, the young experimenter burns her hand, and the house is nearly set on fire. The eccentric Dermody turns up again, now a smart young ensign, having temporarily forsaken letters, and obtained a commission through the interest of Lord Moira. He addresses a flattering poem to Sydney, and passes on to rejoin his regiment at Cork, whence he is to sail for Flanders.

Mr. Owenson's affairs did not improve. He tried his fortune in various provincial theatres, but the political ferment of the years immediately preceding the Union, the disturbed state of the country, and the persecution of the Catholics, all spelt ruin for theatrical enterprises. As soon as Sydney realised her true position she rose to the occasion, and the letter that she wrote to her father, proposing to relieve him of the burden of her maintenance, is full of affection and spirit. It will be observed that as yet she is contented to express herself simply and naturally, without the fine language, the incessant quotations, and the mangled French that disfigured so much of her published work. The girl, who must now have been seventeen or eighteen, had seen her father's name on the list of bankrupts, but it had been explained to her that, with time and economy, he would come out of his difficulties as much respected as ever. Having informed him of her determination not to return to school, but to support herself in future, she continues:—

‘Now, dear papa, I have two novels nearly finished.

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The first is *St. Clair*; I think I wrote it in imitation of *Werther*, which I read last Christmas. The second is a French novel, suggested by my reading the *Memoirs of the Duc de Sully*, and falling in love with Henri iv. Now, if I had time and quiet to finish them, I am sure I could sell them; and observe, sir, Miss Burney got £3000 for *Camilla*, and brought out *Evelina* unknown to her father; but all this takes time.' Sydney goes on to suggest that Olivia shall be placed at a school, where Molly could be taken as children's maid, and that she herself should seek a situation as governess or companion to young ladies.

Through the good offices of her old dancing-master, M. Fontaine, who had been appointed master of ceremonies at the castle, Sydney was introduced to Mrs. Featherstone, or Featherstonehaugh, of Bracklin Castle, who required a governess-companion to her young daughters, and apparently did not object to youth and inexperience. The girl's *début* in her employer's family would scarcely have made a favourable impression in any country less genial and tolerant than the Ireland of that period. On the night of her departure M. Fontaine gave a little *bal d'adieu* in her honour, and as the mail passed the end of his street at midnight, it was arranged that Sydney should take her travelling-dress with her to the ball, and change before starting on her journey. Of course she took no count of the time, and was gaily dancing to the tune of 'Money in Both Pockets,' with an agreeable partner, when the horn sounded at the end of the street. Like an Irish Cinderella, away flew Sydney in her muslin gown and pink shoes and stockings, followed by her admirers, laden with her portmanteau and bundle of clothes. There was just time for Molly to throw an

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old cloak over her charge, and then the coach door was banged-to, and the little governess travelled away through the winter's night. In the excitement of an adventure with an officer *en route*, she allowed her luggage to be carried on in the coach, and arrived at Bracklin, a shivering little object, in her muslin frock and pink satin shoes. Her stammered explanations were received with amusement and sympathy by her kind-hearted hosts, and she was carried off to her own rooms, 'the prettiest suite you ever saw,' she tells her father, 'a study, bedroom, and bath-room, a roaring turf fire in the rooms, an open piano, and lots of books scattered about. Betty, the old nurse, brought me a bowl of laughing potatoes, and gave me a hearty "Much good may it do you, miss"; and didn't I tip her a word of Irish, which delighted her. . . . Our dinner-party were mamma and the two young ladies, two itinerant preceptors, a writing and elocution master, and a dancing-master, and Father Murphy, the P.P.—such fun!—and the Rev. Mr. Beaufort, the curate of Castletown.'

Miss Sydney was quite at her ease with all these new acquaintances, and so brilliant were her sallies at dinner that, according to her own account, the men-servants were obliged to stuff their napkins down their throats till they were nearly suffocated. The priest proposed her health in a comic speech, and a piper having come up on purpose to 'play in Miss Owenson,' the evening wound up with the dancing of Irish jigs, and the singing of Irish songs. One is inclined to doubt whether Sydney's instructions were of much scientific value, but it is evident that she enjoyed her occupation, was the very good friend of both employers and pupils, and knew nothing of the snubs and neglect experienced by so many of our modern Jane Eyres.



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The death of Mrs. Featherstone's mother, Lady Steele, who had been one of the belles of Lord Chesterfield's court, placed a fine old house in Dominic Street, Dublin, at the disposal of the family. At the head of the musical society of Dublin at that date was Sir John Stevenson, who is now chiefly remembered for his arrangement of the airs to Moore's Melodies. One day, while giving a lesson to the Miss Featherstones, Sir John sung a song by Moore, of whom Sydney had then never heard. Pleased at her evident appreciation, Stevenson asked if she would like to meet the poet, and promised to take her and Olivia to a little musical party at his mother's house. Moore had already made a success in London society, which he followed up in the less exclusive circles of Dublin, and it was only between a party at the Provost's and another at Lady Antrim's that he could dash into the paternal shop for a few minutes to sing a couple of songs for his mother's guests. But the effect of his performance upon the Owenson sisters was electrical. They went home in such a state of spiritual exaltation, that they forgot to undress before getting into bed, and awoke to plan, the one a new romance, the other a portrait of the poet.

Sydney had already finished her first novel, *St. Clair*, which she determined to take secretly to a publisher. We are given to understand that this was her first independent literary attempt, though she tells us that her father had printed a little volume of her poems, written between the ages of twelve and fourteen. This book seems to have been published, however, in 1801, when the author must have been at least one-and-twenty. It was dedicated to Lady Moira, through whose influence it found its way into the most fashionable boudoirs of

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Dublin. Be this as it may, Sydney gives a picturesque description of her early morning's ramble in search of a publisher. She eventually left her manuscript in the reluctant hands of a Mr. Brown, who promised to submit it to his reader, and returned to her employer's house before her absence had been remarked. The next day the family left Dublin for Bracklin, and as Sydney had forgotten to give her address to the publisher, it is not surprising that, for the time being, she heard no more of her bantling. Some months later, when she was in Dublin again, she picked up a novel in a friend's house, and found that it was her own *St. Clair*. On recalling herself to the publisher's memory, she received the handsome remuneration of—four copies of her own work! The book, a foolish, high-flown story, a long way after *Werther*, had some success in Dublin, and brought its author—literary ladies being comparatively few at that period—a certain meed of social fame.

Mr. Owenson, who had left the stage in 1798, was settled at Coleraine at this time, and desired to have both his daughters with him. Accordingly, Sydney gave up her employment, and tried to make herself contented at home. But the dulness and discomfort of the life were too much for her, and after a few months she took another situation as governess, this time with a Mrs. Crawford at Fort William, where she seems to have been as much petted and admired as at Bracklin. There is no doubt that Sydney Owenson was a flirt, a sentimental flirt, who loved playing with fire, but it has been hinted that she was inclined to represent the polite attentions of her gallant countrymen as serious affairs of the heart. She left behind her a packet of love-letters (presented to

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her husband after her marriage), and some of these are quoted in her *Memoirs*. The majority, however, point to no very definite 'intentions' on the part of the writers, but are composed in the artificially romantic vein which Rousseau had brought into fashion. Among the letters are one or two from the unfortunate Dermody, who had retired on half-pay, and was now living in London, engaged in writing his *Memoirs* (he was in the early twenties) and preparing his poems for the press.

'Were you a Venus I should forget you,' he writes to Sydney, 'but you are a Laura, a Leonora, and an Eloisa, all in one delightful assemblage.' He is evidently a little piqued by Sydney's admiration of Moore, for in a letter to Mr. Owenson he asks, 'Who is the *Mr. Moore* Sydney mentions? He is nobody here, I assure you, of eminence.' A little later, however, he writes to Sydney: 'You are mistaken if you imagine I have not the highest respect for your friend Moore. I have written the review of his poems in a strain of panegyric to which I am not frequently accustomed. I am told he is a most worthy young man, and I am certain myself of his genius and erudition.' Dermody's own career was nearly at an end. He died of consumption in 1802, aged only twenty-five.

If Sydney scandalised even the easy-going society of the period by her audacious flirtations, she seems to have had the peculiarly Irish faculty of keeping her head in affairs of the heart, and dancing in perfect security on the edge of a gulf of sentiment. Her work helped to steady her, and the love-scenes in her novels served as a safety-valve for her ardent imagination. Her father, notoriously happy-go-lucky about his own affairs, was a

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careful guardian of his daughters' reputation, while old Molly was a dragon of propriety. Sydney, moreover, had acquired one or two women friends, much older than herself, such as the literary Lady Charville, and Mrs. Lefanu, sister of Sheridan, who were always ready with advice and sympathy. With Mrs. Lefanu Sydney corresponded regularly for many years, and in her letters discusses the debatable points in her books, and enlarges upon her own character and temperament. Chief among her ambitions at this time was that of being 'every inch a woman,' and she was a firm believer in the fashionable theory that true womanliness was incompatible with learning. 'I dropped the study of chemistry,' she tells her friend, 'though urged to it by a favourite preceptor, lest I should be less the *woman*. Seduced by taste and a thousand arguments to Greek and Latin, I resisted, lest I should not be a *very woman*. And I have studied music as a sentiment rather than as a science, and drawing as an amusement rather than as an art, lest I should become a musical pedant, or a masculine artist.'

In 1803, the Crawfords having decided to leave Fort William and live entirely in the country, Sydney, who had a mortal dread of boredom, gave up her situation, and returned to her father, who was now settled near Strabane. Here she occupied her leisure in writing a second novel, *The Novice of St. Dominic*, in six volumes. When this was completed, Mrs. Lefanu advised her to take it to London herself, and arrange for its publication. Quite alone, and with very little money in her pocket, the girl travelled to London, and presented herself before Sir Richard Phillips, a well-known publisher, with whom she had already had some correspondence. If we may

believe her own testimony, Sir Richard fell an easy victim to her fascinations, and there is no doubt that he was very kind to her, introduced her to his wife, and found her a lodging. Better still, he bought her book (we are not told the price), and paid her for it at once. The first purchases that she made with her own earnings were a small Irish harp, which accompanied her thereafter wherever she went, and a black 'mode cloak.' After her return to Ireland, Phillips corresponded with her, and gave her literary advice, which is interesting in so far as it shows what the reading public of that day wanted, or was supposed to want.

'The world is not informed about Ireland,' wrote the publisher, 'and I am in a condition to command the light to shine. I am sorry you have assumed the novel form. A series of letters addressed to a friend in London, taking for your model the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, would have secured you the most extensive reading. A matter-of-fact and didactic novel is neither one thing nor the other, and suits no class of readers. Certainly, however, *Paul and Virginia* would suggest a local plan; and it will be possible by writing three or four times over in six or eight months to produce what would *command* attention.' Sir Richard concluded his advice with the assurance that his correspondent had it in her to write an immortal work, if she would only labour it sufficiently, and that her *third* copy was certain to be a monument of Irish genius. Miss Owenson was the last person to act upon the above directions; her books read as if they were dashed off in a fine frenzy of composition. Perhaps she feared that her cherished womanliness would be endangered by too close an attention to accuracy and style.

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The *Novice*, which appeared in 1804, was better than *St. Clair*, but such success as it enjoyed must have been due to the prevailing scarcity of first-rate, or even second-rate novelists, rather than to its own intrinsic merits. The public taste in fiction was not fastidious, and could swallow long-winded discussions and sentimental rhodomontade with an appetite that now seems almost incredible. The *Novice* is said to have been a favourite with Pitt in his last illness, but if this be true, the fact points rather to the decay of the statesman's intellect than to the literary value of the book. Still the author was tasting all the sweets of fame. She was much in request as a literary celebrity, and somebody had actually written for permission to select the best passages from her two books for publication in a work called *The Morality of English Novels*.

In the same year, 1804, an anonymous attack upon the Irish stage in six *Familiar Epistles* was published in Dublin. So cruel and venomous were these epistles that one actor, Edwin, is believed to have died of chagrin at the attack upon his reputation. An answer to the libel presently appeared, which was signed S. O., and has been generally attributed to Sydney Owenson. The *Familiar Epistles* were believed to be the work of John Wilson Croker, then young and unknown, and it may be that the lifelong malignity with which that critic pursued Lady Morgan was due to this early crossing of swords. Sydney herself was fond of hinting that Croker, in his obscure days, had paid her attentions which she, as a successful author, had not cared to encourage, and that wounded vanity was at the bottom of his hatred.

The next book on which Miss Owenson engaged was, if not her best, the one by which she is best known,

namely, *The Wild Irish Girl*. The greater part of this was written while she was staying with Sir Malby Crofton at Longford House, from whose family, as has been seen, she claimed to be descended. Miss Crofton sat for the portrait of the heroine, and much of the scenery was sketched in the wild romantic neighbourhood. About the same time she collected and translated a number of Irish songs which were published under the title of *The Lay of the Irish Harp*. She thus anticipated Moore, and other explorers in this field, for which fact Moore at least gives her credit in the preface to his own collection. She was not a poet, but she wrote one ballad, 'Kate Kearney,' which became a popular song, and is not yet forgotten.

The story of *The Wild Irish Girl* is said to have been founded upon an incident in the author's own life. A young man named Everard had fallen in love with her, but as he was wild, idle, and penniless, his father called upon her to beg her not to encourage him, but to use her influence to make him stick to his work. Sydney behaved so well in the matter that the elder Mr. Everard desired to marry her himself, and though his offer was not accepted, he remained her staunch friend and admirer. The 'local colour' in the book is carefully worked up; indeed, in the present day it would probably be thought that the story was overweighted by the account of local manners and customs. Phillips, alarmed at the liberal principles displayed in the work, which he thought would be distasteful to English patriots, refused at first to give the author her price. To his horror and indignation Miss Owenson, whom he regarded as his own particular property, instantly sent the manuscript to a rival bookseller, Johnson, who published for Miss Edgeworth.

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which was trimmed with the portraits of her rejected lovers !

Foremost among our heroine's admirers at this time was Sir Charles Ormsby, K.C., then member for Munster, He was a widower, deeply in debt, and a good deal older than Sydney, but if there was no actual engagement, there was certainly an 'understanding' between the pair. In May, 1808, Miss Owenson was on a visit to the Dowager Lady Stanley of Alderley at Penrhôs (one of the new friends her celebrity had gained for her), whence she wrote a sentimental epistle to Sir Charles Ormsby. The Sir John Stanley mentioned in the letter was the husband of Maria Josepha Holroyd, to whom he had been married in 1796.

'The figure and person of Lady Stanley are inimitable,' writes Sydney. 'Vandyck would have estimated her at millions. Though old, her manners, her mind, and her conversation are all of the best school. . . . Sir John Stanley is a man *comme il y en a peu*. Something at first of English reserve; but when worn off, I never met a mind more daring, more independent in its reflections, more profound or more refined in its ideas. He said a thousand things like you; I am convinced he has loved as you love. We sat up till two this morning talking of Corinne. . . . I have been obliged to sing "Deep in Love" so often for my handsome host, and every time it is *as for you* I sing it.' The letter concludes with the words, '*Aimons toujours comme à l'ordinaire.*' The pair may have loved, but they were continually quarrelling, and their intimacy was finally broken a year or two later. Lady Morgan preserved to the end of her days a packet of love-letters indorsed, 'Sir Charles Montague Ormsby, Bart., one of the most brilliant wits, deter-



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mined *roués*, agreeable persons, and ugliest men of his day.'

The summer of this year, 1808, Miss Owenson spent in a round of visits to country-houses, and in working, amid many distractions, at her Grecian novel, *Ida of Athens*. After the first volume had gone to press, Phillips took fright at some of the opinions therein expressed, and refused to proceed further with the work. It was then accepted by Longmans, who, however, were somewhat alarmed at what they considered the Deistical principles and the taint of French philosophy that ran through the book. *Ida* is a houri and a woman of genius, who dresses in a tissue of woven air, has a taste for philosophical discussions, and a talent for getting into perilous situations, from which her strong sense of propriety invariably delivers her. This book was the subject of adverse criticism in the first number of the *Quarterly Review*, the critic being, it is believed, Miss Owenson's old enemy, Croker. As a work of art, the novel was certainly a just object of ridicule, but the personalities by which the review is disfigured were unworthy of a responsible critic.

'The language,' observes the reviewer, 'is an inflated jargon, composed of terms picked up in all countries, and wholly irreducible to any ordinary rules of grammar and sense. The sentiments are mischievous in tendency, profligate in principle, licentious and irreverent in the highest degree.' The first part of this accusation was only too well founded, but the licentiousness of which Lady Morgan's works were invariably accused in the *Quarterly Review*, can only have existed in the mind of the reviewer. One cannot but smile to think how many persons with a taste for highly-spiced fiction must have

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been set searching through Lady Morgan's novels by these notices, and how bitterly they must have been disappointed. The review in question concludes with the remark that if the author would buy a spelling-book, a pocket-dictionary, exchange her raptures for common sense, and gather a few precepts of humility from the Bible, 'she might hope to prove, not indeed a good writer of novels, but a useful friend, a faithful wife, a tender mother, and a respectable and happy mistress of a family.' This impertinence is thoroughly characteristic of the days when the *Quarterly* was regarded as an amusing but frivolous, not to say flippant, publication.

*Ida of Athens* received the honour of mention in a note to *Childe Harold*. 'I will request Miss Owenson,' writes Byron, 'when she next chooses an Athenian heroine for her four volumes, to have the goodness to marry her to somebody more of a gentleman than a "Disdar Aga" (who, by the way, is not an Aga), the most impolite of petty officers, the greatest patron of larceny Athens ever saw (except Lord E[lgin]), and the unworthy occupant of the Acropolis, on a handsome stipend of 150 piastres (£8 sterling), out of which he has to pay his garrison, the most ill-regulated corps in the ill-regulated Ottoman Empire. I speak it tenderly, seeing I was once the cause of the husband of Ida nearly suffering the bastinado; and because the said Disdar is a turbulent fellow who beats his wife, so that I exhort and beseech Miss Owenson to sue for a separate maintenance on behalf of Ida.'

In 1809 Lady Abercorn, the third wife of the first Marquis, having taken a sudden fancy to Miss Owenson, proposed that she should come to Stanmore Priory, and afterwards to Baron's Court, as a kind of permanent visitor. A fine lady of the old-fashioned, languid, idle,

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easily bored type, Lady Abercorn desired a lively, amusing companion, who would deliver her from the terrors of a solitude *à deux*, make music in the evenings, and help to entertain her guests. It was represented to Sydney that such an invitation was not lightly to be refused, but as acceptance involved an almost total separation from her friends, she hesitated to enter into any actual engagement, and went to the Abercorns for two or three months as an ordinary visitor. Lord Abercorn, who was then between fifty and sixty, had been married three times, and divorced once. So fastidious a fine gentleman was he that the maids were not allowed to make his bed except in white kid gloves, and his groom of his chambers had orders to fumigate his rooms after liveried servants had been in them. He is described as handsome, witty, and blasé, a *roué* in principles and a Tory in politics. Nothing pleased Lady Morgan better in her old age, we are told, than to have it insinuated that there had been 'something wrong' between herself and Lord Abercorn.

In January, 1810, Sydney writes to Mrs. Lefanu from Stanmore Priory to the effect that she is the best-lodged, best-fed, dullest author in his Majesty's dominions, and that the sound of a commoner's name is refreshment to her ears. She is surrounded by ex-lord-lieutenants, unpopular princesses (including her of Wales) deposed potentates (including him of Sweden), half the nobility of England, and many of the best wits and writers. She had sat to Sir Thomas Lawrence for her portrait, and sold her Indian novel, *The Missionary*, for a famous price. Lord Castlereagh, while staying at Stanmore, heard portions of the work read aloud, and admired it so much that he offered to take the author to London,

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and give her a rendezvous with her publisher in his own study. Stockdale, the publisher, was so much impressed by his surroundings that he bid £400 for the book, and the agreement was signed and sealed under Lord Castlereagh's eye. *The Missionary* was not so successful as *The Wild Irish Girl*, and added nothing to the author's reputation.

It was not until the end of 1810 that Miss Owenson decided to become a permanent member of the Abercorn household. About this time, or a little later, she wrote a short description of her temperament and feelings, from which a sentence or two may be quoted. 'Inconsiderate and indiscreet, never saved by prudence, but often rescued by pride; often on the verge of error, but never passing the line. Committing myself in every way *except in my own esteem*—without any command over my feelings, my words, or writings—yet full of self-possession as to action and conduct.' After describing her sufferings from nervous susceptibility and mental depression, she continues: 'But the hand that writes this has lost nothing of the contour of health or the symmetry of youth. I am in possession of all the fame I ever hoped or ambitioned. I wear not the appearance of twenty years; I am now, as I generally am, sad and miserable.'

In 1811 Dr. Morgan, a good-looking widower of about eight-and-twenty, accepted the post of private physician to Lord Abercorn. He was a Cambridge man, an intimate friend of Dr. Jenner's, and possessed a small fortune of his own. When he first arrived at Baron's Court, Miss Owenson was absent, and he heard so much of her praises that he conceived a violent prejudice against her. On her return she set to work systematically to fascinate him, and succeeded even better than she

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had hoped or desired. In Lady Abercorn he had a warm partisan, but it may be suspected that the ambitious Miss Owenson found it hard to renounce all hopes of a more brilliant match. The Abercorns having vowed that Dr. Morgan should be made Sir Charles, and that they would push his fortunes, Sydney yielded to their importunities so far as to write to her father, and ask his consent to her engagement.

‘I dare say you will be amazingly astonished,’ she observes, ‘but not half so much as I am, for Lord and Lady Abercorn have hurried on the business in such a manner that I really don’t know what I am about. They called me in last night, and, more like parents than friends, begged me to be guided by them—that it was their wish not to lose sight of me . . . and that if I accepted Morgan, the man upon earth they most esteemed and approved, they would be friends to both for life—that we should reside with them one year after our marriage, so that we might lay up our income to begin the world. He is also to continue their physician. He has now £500 a year, independent of his practice. I don’t myself see the thing quite in the light they do; but they think him a man of such great abilities, such great worth and honour, that I am the most fortunate person in the world.’

To her old friend, Mrs. Lefanu, she writes in much the same strain. ‘The licence and ring have been in the house these ten days, and all the settlements made; yet I have been battling off from day to day, and have only ten minutes back procured a little breathing time. The struggle is almost too great for me. On one side engaged, beyond retrieval, to a man who has frequently declared to my friends that if I break off he will not survive it!

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On the other, the dreadful certainty of being parted for ever from a country and friends I love, and a family I adore.'

The 'breathing time' was to consist of a fortnight's visit to her sister, Lady Clarke, in Dublin, in order to be near her father, who was in failing health. The fortnight, however, proved an exceedingly elastic period. Mr. Owenson was not dangerously ill, the winter season was just beginning, and Miss Owenson was more popular than ever. Her unfortunate lover, as jealous as he was enamoured, being detained by his duties at Baron's Court, could only write long letters of complaint, reproach, and appeal to his hard-hearted lady. Sydney was thoroughly enjoying herself, and was determined to make the most of her last days of liberty. She admitted afterwards that she had behaved very badly at this time, and deserved to have lost the best husband woman ever had.

'I picture to myself,' writes poor Dr. Morgan, 'the thoughtless and heartless Glorvina trifling with her friend, jesting at his sufferings, and flirting with every man she meets.' He sends her some commissions, but declares that there is only one about which he is really anxious, 'and that is to love me *exclusively*; to prefer me to every other good; to think of me, speak of me, write to me, and look forward to our union as to the completion of every wish, as I do by you. Do this, and though you grow as ugly as Sycorax, you will never lose in me the fondest, most doating, affectionate of husbands. Glorvina, I was born for tenderness; my business in life is *to love*. . . . I read part of *The Way to Keep Him* this morning, and I see now you take the widow for your model; but it won't do, for though I love you in *every* mood, it is only when you are true to nature, passionate and tender,

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that I adore you. You are never less interesting to me than when you *brillez* in a large party.'

The fortnight's leave of absence had been granted in September, and by the end of November Dr. Morgan is thoroughly displeased with his truant *fiancée*, and asks why she could not have told him when she went away, that she intended to stay till Christmas. 'I know,' he writes, 'this is but a specimen of the roundabout policy of all your countrywomen. How strange it is that you, who are in general *great* beyond every woman I know, philosophical and magnanimous, should *in detail* be so often ill-judging, wrong, and (shall I say) little?' In December Sydney writes to say that she will return directly after Christmas, and declares that the terrible struggle of feeling, which she had tried to forget in every species of mental dissipation, is now over; friends, relatives, country, all are resigned, and she is his for ever! A little later she shows signs of wavering again; she cannot make up her mind to part from her invalid father just yet; but this time Dr. Morgan puts his foot down, and issues his ultimatum in a stern and manly letter. He will be trifled with no longer. Sydney must either keep her promise and return at Christmas, or they had better part, never to meet again. 'The love I require,' he writes, 'is no ordinary affection. The woman who marries me must be *identified* with me. I must have a large bank of tenderness to draw upon. I must have frequent profession and frequent demonstration of it. Woman's love is all in all to me; it stands in place of honours and riches, and what is yet more, in place of tranquillity of mind.'

This letter, backed by one from Lady Abercorn, brought Sydney to her senses. In the first days of the new year (1812) she arrived at Baron's Court, a little shamefaced,

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and more than a little doubtful of her reception. The marquis was stiff, and the marchioness stately, but Sir Charles, who had just been knighted by the Lord-Lieutenant, was too pleased to get his lady-love back, to harbour any resentment against her. A few days after her return, as she was sitting over the fire in a morning wrapper, Lady Abercorn came in and said :

‘Glorvina, come upstairs directly and be married; there must be no more trifling.’

The bride was led into her ladyship’s dressing-room, where the bridegroom was awaiting her in company with the chaplain, and the ceremony took place. The marriage was kept a secret from the other guests at the time, but a few nights later Lord Abercorn filled his glass after dinner, and drank to the health of ‘Sir Charles and Lady Morgan.’

## PART II

THE marriage, unpromising as it appeared at the outset, proved an exceptionally happy one. Sir Charles was a straightforward, worthy, if somewhat dull gentleman, with no ambition, a nervous distaste for society, and a natural indolence of temperament. To his wife he gave the unstinted sympathy and admiration that her restless vanity craved, while she invariably maintained that he was the wisest, brightest, and handsomest of his sex. She seems to have given him no occasion for jealousy after marriage, though to the last she preserved her passion for society, and her ambition for social recog-



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nition and success. The first year of married life, which she described as a period of storm, interspersed with brilliant sunshine, was spent with the Abercorns at Baron's Court.

'Though living in a palace,' wrote Sydney to Mrs. Lefanu, early in 1812, 'we have all the comfort and independence of a home. . . . As to me, I am *every inch a wife*, and so ends that brilliant thing that was Glorvina. *N.B.*—I intend to write a book to explode the vulgar idea of matrimony being the tomb of love. Matrimony is the real thing, and all before but leather and prunella.' In a letter to Lady Stanley she paints Sir Charles in the romantic colours appropriate to a novelist's husband. 'In *love* he is Sheridan's Falkland, and in his view of things there is a *mélange* of cynicism and sentiment that will never suffer him to be as happy as the inferior million that move about him. Marriage has taken nothing from the *romance* of his passion for me; and by bringing a sense of *property* with it, has rendered him more exigent and nervous about me than before.'

The luxury of Baron's Court was probably more than counterbalanced by the inevitable drawbacks of married life in a patron's household, where the husband, at least, was at that patron's beck and call. Before the end of the year, the Morgans were contemplating a modest establishment of their own, and Sydney had set to work upon a novel, the price of which was to furnish the new house. Mr. Owenson had died shortly after his daughter's marriage, and Lady Morgan persuaded her husband to settle in Dublin, in order that she might be near her sister and her many friends. A house was presently taken in Kildare Street, and Sir Charles, who had obtained

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the post of physician to the Marshalsea, set himself to establish a practice. Lady Morgan prided herself upon her housewifely talents, and in a letter dated May, 1813, she describes how she has made their old house clean and comfortable, all that their means would permit, 'except for one little bit of a room, four inches by three, which is fitted up in the *Gothic*, and I have collected into it the best part of a very good cabinet of natural history of Sir Charles's, eight or nine hundred volumes of choice books in French, English, Italian, and German, some little curiosities, and a few scraps of old china, so that, with muslin draperies, etc., I have made no contemptible set-out. . . . With respect to authorship, I fear it is over; I have been making chair-covers instead of systems, and cheapening pots and pans instead of selling sentiment and philosophy.'

In the midst of all her domestic labours, however, Lady Morgan contrived to finish a novel, *O'Donnel*, which Colburn published in 1814, and for which she received £550. The book was ill-reviewed, but it was an even greater popular success than *The Wild Irish Girl*. The heroine, like most of Lady Morgan's heroines, is evidently meant for an idealised portrait of herself, and the great ladies by whom she is surrounded are sketched from Lady Abercorn and certain of the guests at Baron's Court. The Liberal, or as they would now be called, Radical principles inculcated in the book gave bitter offence to the author's old-fashioned friends, and increased the rancour of her Tory reviewers. But *O'Donnel* found numerous admirers, among them no less a person than Sir Walter Scott, who notes in his diary for March 14, 1826: 'I have amused myself occasionally very pleasantly during the last few days by reading over

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Lady Morgan's novel of *O'Donnel*, which has some striking and beautiful passages of situation and description, and in the comic part is very rich and entertaining. I do not remember being so pleased with it at first. There is a want of story, always fatal to a book on the first reading—and it is well if it gets the chance of a second.'

The following year, 1815, France being once again open to English travellers, the Morgans paid a visit to Paris, Lady Morgan having undertaken to write a book about what was then a strange people and a strange country. The pair went a good deal into society, and made many friends, among them Lafayette, Cuvier, the Comte de Ségur, Madame de Genlis, and Madame Jerome Bonaparte. Sydney, whose Celtic manners were probably more congenial to the French than Anglo-Saxon reserve, seems to have received a great deal of attention, and her not over-strong head was slightly turned in consequence.

'The French admire you more than any Englishwoman who has appeared here since the Battle of Waterloo,' wrote Madame Jerome Bonaparte to Lady Morgan, after the latter had returned to Ireland. 'France is the country you should reside in, because you are so much admired, and here no Englishwoman has received the same attentions since you. I am dying to see your last publication. Public expectation is as high as possible. How happy you must be at filling the world with your name as you do! Madame de Staël and Madame de Genlis are forgotten; and if the love of fame be of any weight with you, your excursion to Paris was attended with brilliant success.'

Madame de Genlis, in her *Memoirs*, gives a more soberly-worded account of the impression produced by

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Lady Morgan on Parisian society. The author of *France* is described as 'not beautiful, but with something lively and agreeable in her whole person. She is very clever, and seems to have a good heart; it is a pity that for the sake of popularity she should have the mania of meddling in politics. . . . Her vivacity and rather springing carriage seemed very strange in Parisian circles. She soon learned that good taste of itself condemned that kind of demeanour; in fact, gesticulation and noisy manners have never been popular in France.' The spoilt little lady was by no means satisfied with this portrait, and Sir Charles, who was away from home at the time the *Memoirs* appeared, writes to console her. 'You must not mind that lying old witch Madame de Genlis' attack upon you,' says the admiring husband. 'I thought she would not let you off easily; you were not only a better and younger (and *I* may say *prettier*) author than herself, but also a more popular one.'

Over the price to be paid for *France*, to which Sir Charles contributed some rather heavy chapters on medical science, political economy, and jurisprudence, there was the usual battle between the keen little woman and her publisher. Colburn, having done well with *O'Donnel*, felt justified in offering £750 for the new work, but Lady Morgan demanded £1000, and got it. The sum must have been a substantial compensation for the wounds that her vanity received at the hands of the reviewers. *France*, which made its appearance in 1817, in two volumes quarto, was eagerly read and loudly abused. Croker, in the *Quarterly Review*, attacked the book, or rather the author, in an article which has become almost historic for its virulence. Poor Lady Morgan was accused of bad taste, bombast and nonsense, blunders,

ignorance of the French language and manners, general ignorance, Jacobinism, falsehood, licentiousness, and impiety! The first four or five charges might have been proved with little difficulty, if it were worth while to break a butterfly on a wheel, but it was necessary to distort the meaning and even the text of the original in order to give any colour to the graver accusations.

Croker had discovered, much to his delight, that the translator of the work (which was also published in Paris) had subjoined a note to some of Lady Morgan's scraps of French, in which he confessed that though the words were printed to look like French, he could not understand them. The critic observes, *à propos* of this fact, 'It is, we believe, peculiar to Lady Morgan's works, that her English readers require an English translation of her English, and her French readers a French translation of her French.' This was a fair hit, as also was the ridicule thrown upon such sentences as 'Cider is not held in any estimation by the *véritables Amphitryons* of rural *savoir faire*.' Croker professes to be shocked at Lady Morgan's mention of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, having hitherto cherished the hope that 'no British female had ever seen this detestable book'; while his outburst of virtuous indignation at her mention of the 'superior effusions' of Parny, which some Frenchman had recommended to her, is really superb. 'Parny,' he exclaims, 'is the most beastly, the most detestably wicked and blasphemous of all the writers who have ever disgraced literature. *Les Guerres des Dieux* is the most dreadful tissue of obscenity and depravity that the devil ever inspired to the depraved heart of man, and we tremble with horror at the guilt of having read unwittingly even so much of the work as enables us to pronounce this character of it.'

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Croker concludes with the hope that he has given such an idea of this book as might prevent, in some degree, the circulation of trash which, under the name of a ‘*Lady* author,’ might otherwise have found its way into the hands of young persons of both sexes, for whose perusal it was, on the score both of morals and politics, utterly unfit. Such a notice naturally defeated its own object, and *France* went triumphantly through several editions. The review attracted almost as much attention as the book, and many protests were raised against it. ‘What cruel work you make with Lady Morgan,’ wrote Byron to Murray. ‘You should recollect that she is a woman; though, to be sure, they are now and then very provoking, still as authoresses they can do no great harm; and I think it a pity so much good invective should have been laid out upon her, when there is such a fine field of us Jacobin gentlemen for you to work upon.’ The Regent himself, according to Lady Charleville’s report, had said of Croker: ‘D——d blackguard to abuse a woman; couldn’t he let her *France* alone, if it be all lies, and read her novels, and thank her, by Jasus, for being a good Irishwoman?’

Lady Morgan, as presently appeared, was not only quite able to defend herself, but to give as good as she got. Peel, in a letter to Croker, says: ‘Lady Morgan vows vengeance against you as the supposed author of the article in the *Quarterly*, in which her atheism, profanity, indecency, and ignorance are exposed. You are to be the hero of some novel of which she is about to be delivered. I hope she has not heard of your predilection for angling, and that she will not describe you as she describes one of her heroes, as “seated in his *piscatory* corner, intent on the destruction of the finny tribe.”’

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‘Lady Morgan,’ it seems, replies Croker, ‘is resolved to make me read one of her novels. I hope I shall feel interested enough to learn the language. I wrote the first part of the article in question, but was called away to Ireland when it was in the press; and I am sorry to say that some blunders crept in accidentally, and one or two were premeditatedly added, which, however, I do not think Lady Morgan knows enough of either English, French, or Latin to find out. If she goes on, we shall have sport.’

Early in 1818 Colburn wrote to suggest that the Morgans should proceed to Italy with a view to collaborating in a book on that country, and offered them the handsome sum of £2000 for the copyright. By this time Sir Charles had lost most of his practice, owing to his publication of a scientific work, *The Outlines of the Physiology of Life*, which was considered objectionably heterodox by the Dublin public. There was no obstacle, therefore, to his leaving home for a lengthened period, and joining his wife in her literary labours. In May, the pair journeyed to London *en route* for the South, Lady Morgan taking with her the nearly finished manuscript of a new novel, *Florence Macarthy*. With his first reading of this book Colburn was so charmed, that he presented the author with a fine parure of amethysts as a tribute of admiration.

According to the testimony of impartial witnesses, Lady Morgan made as decided a social success in Italy as she had done a couple of years earlier in France. Moore, who met the couple in Florence, notes in his diary for October 1819: ‘Went to see Sir Charles and Lady Morgan; her success everywhere astonishing. Camac was last night at the Countess of Albany’s (the Pre-

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tender's wife and Alfieri's), and saw Lady Morgan there in the seat of honour, quite the queen of the room.' In Rome the same appreciation awaited her. 'The Duchess of Devonshire,' writes her ladyship, 'is unceasing in her attentions. Cardinal Fesche (Bonaparte's uncle) is quite my beau. . . . Madame Mère (Napoleon's mother) sent to say she would be glad to see me; we were received quite in an imperial style. I never saw so fine an old lady—still quite handsome. The pictures of her sons hung round the room, all in royal robes, and her daughters and grandchildren, and at the head of them all, *old Mr. Bonaparte*. She is full of sense, feeling, and spirit, and not the least what I expected—vulgar.'

*Florence Macarthy* was published during its author's absence abroad. The heroine, Lady Clancare, a novelist and politician, a beauty and a wit, is obviously intended for Lady Morgan herself, while Lady Abercorn figures again under the title of Lady Dunore. But the most striking of all the character-portraits is Counsellor Con Crawley, who was sketched from Lady Morgan's old enemy, John Wilson Croker. According to Moore, Croker winced more under this caricature than under any of the direct attacks which were made upon him. Con Crawley, we are told, was of a bilious, saturnine constitution, even his talent being but the result of disease. These physical disadvantages, combined with an education 'whose object was pretension, and whose principle was arrogance, made him at once a thing fearful and pitiable, at war with its species and itself, ready to crush in manhood as to sting in the cradle, and leading his overweening ambition to pursue its object by ways dark and hidden—safe from the penalty of crime, and exposed only to the obloquy which he laughed to scorn. If ever there



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was a man formed alike by nature and education to betray the land which gave him birth, and to act openly as the pander of political corruption, or secretly as the agent of defamation; who would stoop to seek his fortune by effecting the fall of a frail woman, or would strive to advance it by stabbing the character of an honest one; who could crush aspiring merit behind the ambuscade of anonymous security, while he came forward openly in defence of the vileness which rank sanctified and influence protected—that man was Conway Crawley.’

The truth of the portraiture of the whole Crawley family—exaggerated as it may seem in modern eyes—was at once recognised by Lady Morgan’s countrymen. Sir Jonah Barrington, an undisputed authority on Irish manners and character, writes: ‘The Crawleys are superlative, and suffice to bring before my vision, in their full colouring, and almost without a variation, persons and incidents whom and which I have many a time encountered.’ Again, Owen Maddyn, who was by no means prejudiced in Lady Morgan’s favour, admits that her attack on Croker had much effect in its day, and was written on the model of the Irish school of invective furnished by Flood and Grattan. As a novelist, he held that she pointed the way to Lever, and adds: ‘The rattling vivacity of the Irish character, its ebullient spirit, and its wrathful eloquence of sentiment and language, she well portrayed; one can smell the potheen and turf smoke even in her pictures of a boudoir.’ In this sentence are summed up the leading characteristics, not only of *Florence Macarthy*, but of all Lady Morgan’s national romances.

*Italy* was published simultaneously in London and Paris in June, 1821, and produced an even greater sensa-

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tion than the work on France, though Croker declared that it fell dead from the press, and devoted the greater part of his 'review' in the *Quarterly* to an analysis of Colburn's methods of advertisement. Criticism of a penal kind, he explained, was not called for, because, 'in the first place, we are convinced that this woman is wholly *incorrigible*; secondly, we hope that her indelicacy, vanity, and malignity are inimitable, and that, therefore, her example is very little dangerous; and thirdly, though every page teems with errors of all kinds, from the most disgusting to the most ludicrous, they are smothered in such Boeotian dulness that they can do no harm.' In curious contrast to this professional criticism is a passage in one of Byron's letters to Moore. 'Lady Morgan,' writes the poet, 'in a *really excellent* book, I assure you, on Italy, calls Venice an ocean Rome; I have the very same expression in *Foscari*, and yet you know that the play was written months ago, and sent to England; the *Italy* I received only on the 16th. . . . When you write to Lady Morgan, will you thank her for her handsome speeches in her book about *my* books? Her work is fearless and excellent on the subject of Italy—pray tell her so—and I know the country. I wish she had fallen in with *me*; I could have told her a thing or two that would have confirmed her positions.'

Almost simultaneously with the appearance of *Italy*, Colburn printed in his *New Monthly Magazine* a long, vehement, and rather incoherent attack by Lady Morgan upon her critics. The editor, Thomas Campbell, explained in an indignant letter to the *Times*, that the article had been inserted by the proprietor without being first submitted to the editorial eye, and that he was in no way responsible for its contents. Colburn also wrote

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to the *Times* to refute the *Quarterly* reviewer's statements regarding the sales of *Italy*, and publicly to declare his entire satisfaction at the result of the undertaking, and his willingness to receive from the author another work of equal interest on the same terms. In short, never was a book worse reviewed or better advertised.

The next venture of the indefatigable Lady Morgan, who felt herself capable of dealing with any subject, no matter how little she might know of it, was a *Life of Salvator Rosa*. This, which was her own favourite among all her books, is a rather imaginative work, which hardly comes up to modern biographical standards. The author seems to have been influenced in her choice of a subject rather by the patriotic character of Salvator Rosa than by his artistic attainments. Lady Morgan was once asked by a fellow-writer where she got her facts, to which she replied, 'We all imagine our facts, you know—and then happily forget them; it is to be hoped our readers do the same.' Nevertheless, she seems to have taken a good deal of trouble to 'get up' the material for her biography; it was in her treatment of it that she sometimes allowed her ardent Celtic imagination to run away with her. About this time Colburn proposed that Sir Charles and Lady Morgan should contribute to his magazine, *The New Monthly*, and offered them half as much again as his other writers, who were paid at the rate of sixteen guineas a sheet. For this periodical Lady Morgan wrote a long essay on *Absenteeism* and other articles, some of which were afterwards republished.

In the spring of 1824 the Morgans came to London for the season, and went much into the literary society

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than those caused by inimical reviewers. No foreigner of distinction thought a visit to Dublin complete without an introduction to our author, who figures in several contemporary memoirs, not always in a flattering light. That curious personage, Prince Pückler Muskau, was travelling through England and Ireland in 1828, and has left a little vignette of Lady Morgan in the published record of his journey. 'I was very eager,' he explains, 'to make the acquaintance of a lady whom I rate so highly as an authoress. I found her, however, very different from what I had pictured to myself. She is a little, frivolous, lively woman, apparently between thirty and forty, neither pretty nor ugly, but by no means inclined to resign all claims to the former, and with really fine expressive eyes. She has no idea of *mauvaise honte* or embarrassment; her manners are not the most refined, and affect the *aisance* and levity of the fashionable world, which, however, do not sit calmly or naturally upon her. She has the English weakness of talking incessantly of fashionable acquaintances, and trying to pose for very *recherché*, to a degree quite unworthy of a woman of such distinguished talents; she is not at all aware how she thus underrates herself.' The *Quarterly Review* seized upon this passage with malicious delight. The prince, as the reviewer points out, had dropped one lump of sugar into his bowl of gall; he had guessed Lady Morgan's age at between thirty and forty. 'Miss Owenson,' comments the writer, who was probably Croker, 'was an established authoress six-and-twenty years ago; and if any lady, player's daughter or not, knew what *she* knew when she published her first work at eight or nine years of age (which Miss Owenson must have been at that time according to the prince's calculation), she was

undoubtedly such a juvenile prodigy as would be quite worthy to make a *case* for the *Gentleman's Magazine*.'

Another observer, who was present at some of the Castle festivities, and who had long pictured Lady Morgan in imagination as a sylphlike and romantic person, has left on record his amazement when the celebrated lady stood before him. 'She certainly formed a strange figure in the midst of that dazzling scene of beauty and splendour. Every female present wore feathers and trains; but Lady Morgan scorned both appendages. Hardly more than four feet high, with a spine not quite straight, slightly uneven shoulders and eyes, Lady Morgan glided about in a close-cropped wig, bound with a fillet of gold, her large face all animation, and with a witty word for everybody. I afterwards saw her at the theatre, where she was cheered enthusiastically. Her dress was different from the former occasion, but not less original. A red Celtic cloak, fastened by a rich gold fibula, or Irish Tara brooch, imparted to her little ladyship a gorgeous and withal a picturesque appearance, which antecedent associations considerably strengthened.'

In 1829 *The Book of the Boudoir* was published, with a preface in which Lady Morgan gives the following naïve account of its genesis: 'I was just setting off to Ireland—the horses literally putting-to—when Mr. Colburn arrived with his flattering proposition [for a new book]. Taking up a scrubby manuscript volume which the servant was about to thrust into the pocket of the carriage, he asked what was that. I said it was one of my volumes of odds and ends, and read him my last entry. "This is the very thing," he said, and carried it off with him.' The book was correctly described as a volume of odds and ends, and was hardly worth preserving in a

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permanent shape, though it contains one or two interesting autobiographical scraps, such as the account of *My First Rout*, from which a quotation has already been given. A writer in *Blackwood* reviewed the work in a vein of ironical admiration, professing to be much impressed by the author's knowledge of metaphysics as exemplified in such a sentence as: 'The idea of cause is a consequence of our consciousness of the force we exert in subjecting externals to the changes dictated by our volition.' Unable to keep up the laudatory strain, even in joke, the reviewer (his style points to Christopher North) calls a literary friend to his assistance, who takes the opposite view, and declares that the book is 'a tawdry tissue of tedious trumpery; a tessellated texture of threadbare thievery; a trifling transcript of trite twaddle and trapessing tittle-tattle. . . . Like everything that falls from her pen, it is pert, shallow, and conceited, a farrago of ignorance, indecency, and blasphemy, a tag-rag and bob-tail style of writing—like a harlequin's jacket.'

Lady Morgan bobbed up as irrepressibly as ever from under this torrent of (so-called) criticism, made a tour in France and Belgium for the purpose of writing more 'trapessing tittle-tattle,' and on her return to London, such were the profits on blasphemy and indecency, bought her first carriage. This equipage was a source of much amusement to her friends in Dublin, 'Neither she nor Sir Charles,' we are told, 'knew the difference between a good carriage and a bad one—a carriage was a carriage to them. It was never known where this vehicle was bought, except that Lady Morgan declared it came from the first carriage-builder in London. In shape it was like a grasshopper, as well as in colour.

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Very high and very springy, with enormous wheels, it was difficult to get into, and dangerous to get out of. Sir Charles, who never in his life before had mounted a coach-box, was persuaded by his wife to drive his own carriage. He was extremely short-sighted, and wore large green spectacles out of doors. His costume was a coat much trimmed with fur, and heavily braided. James Grant, the tall Irish footman, in the brightest of red plush, sat beside him, his office being to jump down whenever anybody was knocked down, or run over, for Sir Charles drove as it pleased God. The horse was mercifully a very quiet animal, and much too small for the carriage, or the mischief would have been worse. Lady Morgan, in the large bonnet of the period, and a cloak lined with fur hanging over the back of the carriage, gave, as she conceived, the crowning grace to a neat and elegant turn-out. The only drawback to her satisfaction was the alarm caused by Sir Charles's driving; and she was incessantly springing up to adjure him to take care, to which he would reply with warmth, after the manner of husbands.'

In 1830 Lady Morgan published her *France* (1829-30). This book was not a commission, but she had told Colburn that she was writing it, and as he made her no definite offer, she opened negotiations with the firm of Saunders and Otley. Colburn, who looked upon her as his special property, was furious at her desertion, and informed her that if she did not at once break off with Saunders and Otley, it would be no less detrimental to her literary than to her pecuniary interest. Undismayed by this threat, Lady Morgan accepted the offer of a thousand pounds made her by the rival firm. Colburn, who was a power in the literary market, kept his word.

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Fair together; in short, having cut me down with his tomahawk as a reviewer, he smothers me with roses as a man. I always say of my enemies before we meet, "Let me at them."

The other literary women were naturally the chief object of interest to her. Lady Morgan seems to have been fairly free from professional jealousy, though she hated her countrywoman, Lady Blessington, with a deadly hatred. Mrs. Gore, then one of the most fashionable novelists, she finds 'a pleasant little *rondelette* of a woman, something of my own style. We talked and laughed together, as good-natured women do, and agreed upon many points.' The learned Mrs. Somerville is described as 'a simple, little, middle-aged woman. Had she not been presented to me by name and reputation, I should have said she was one of the respectable twaddling matrons one meets at every ball, dressed in a snug mulberry velvet gown, and a little cap with a red flower. I asked her how she could descend from the stars to mix among us. She said she was obliged to go out with a daughter. From the glimpse of her last night, I should say there was no imagination, no deep moral philosophy, though a great deal of scientific lore, and a great deal of *bonhomie*.' For 'poor dear Jane Porter,' the author of *Scottish Chiefs*, Lady Morgan felt the natural contempt of a 'showy woman' for one who looks like a 'shabby canoness.' 'Miss Porter,' she records, 'told me she was taken for me the other night, and talked to *as such* by a party of Americans. She is tall, lank, lean, and lackadaisical, dressed in the deepest black, with a battered black gauze hat, and the air of a regular Melpomene. I am the reverse of all this, and *sans vanité*, the best-dressed woman wherever I go. Last night I wore a blue satin,



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trimmed fully with magnificent point-lace, and stomacher à la Sévigné, light blue velvet hat and feathers, with an aigrette of sapphires and diamonds.' As Lady Morgan at this time was nearer sixty than fifty, rouged liberally, and made all her own dresses, her appearance in the costume above described must at least have been remarkable.

Lady Morgan's last novel, a Belgian story called *The Princess, or the Béguine*, was published by Bentley in 1834, and for the first edition she received £350, a sad falling-off from the prices received in former days. As her popularity waned, she grew discontented with life in Dublin, 'the wretched capital of wretched Ireland,' as she calls it, and in a moment of mental depression she entered the characteristic query, '*Cui bono?*' in her diary. To the same faithful volume she confided complaints even of her beloved Morgan, but the fact that she could find nothing worse to reproach him with than a disinclination for fresh air and exercise, speaks volumes for his marital virtue. A more serious trouble came from failing eyesight, which in 1837 threatened to develop into total blindness. It was in this year, when things seemed at their darkest, that a pension of £300 a year was conferred on her by Lord Melbourne, 'in recognition of her merits, literary and patriotic.' It was probably this unexpected accession of income that decided the Morgans to leave Dublin, and spend the remainder of their days in London. They found a pleasant little house in William Street, Knightsbridge, a new residential quarter which was just growing up under the fostering care of Mr. Cubitt. Lady Morgan went 'into raptures over the pretty new quarter,' and wrote some articles on Pimlico in the *Athenæum*. She also got up a successful agitation for an entrance into Hyde Park at what is now known as Albert Gate. For

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that, like all the sceptics he ever approached, they were absurdly prejudiced, and proof against all new impressions. ‘Neither of them, though both were literary and musical, could endure German literature and music, had got beyond the stale sarcasms of the *Anti-Jacobin*, or could admit that there is glory for such men as Weber, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn, as well as for Cimarosa and Paisiello. . . . Her familiar conversation was a series of brilliant, egotistic, shrewd, and genial sallies, and she could be either caressing or impudent. In the matter of self-approbation she had no Statute of Limitation, but boasted of having taught Taglioni to dance an Irish jig, and declared that she had created the Irish novel, though in the next breath she would say that she was a child when Miss Edgeworth was a grown woman.’ Her blunders were proverbial, as when she asked in all simplicity, ‘Who was Jeremy Taylor?’ and on being presented to Mrs. Sarah Austin, complimented her on having written *Pride and Prejudice*.

Another friend, Abraham Hayward, used to say that Lady Morgan had been transplanted to London too late, and that she was never free of the corporation of fine ladies, though she saw a good deal of them. ‘She erroneously fancied that she was expected to entertain the company, be it what it might, and she was fond of telling stories in which she figured as the companion of the great, instead of confining herself to scenes of low Irish life, which she described inimitably. Lady Cork was accustomed to say, “I like Lady Morgan very much as an Irish blackguard, but I can’t endure her as an English fine lady.”’

In 1843 Sir Charles died rather suddenly from heart disease. His wife mourned him sincerely, but not for

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long in solitude. She found the anæsthetic for her grief in society, and after a few months of widowhood writes: ‘Everybody makes a point of having me out, and I am beginning to be familiarised with my great loss. London is the best place in the world for the happy and the unhappy; there is a floating capital of sympathy for every human good or evil. I am a nobody, and yet what kindness I am daily receiving.’ Again, in 1845, after her sister’s death, she notes in her diary: ‘The world is my gin or opium; I take it for a few hours *per diem*—excitement, intoxication, absence. I return to my desolate home, and wake to all the horrors of sobriety. . . . Yet I am accounted the agreeable rattle of the great ladies’ coterie, and I talk *pas mal* to many clever men all day. . . . That Park near me, of which my beloved Morgan used to say, “It is ours more than the Queen’s, we use it daily and enjoy it nightly”—that Park that I worked so hard to get an entrance into, I never walk in it; it seems to me covered with crape.’

Among the friends of Lady Morgan’s old age were the Carter Halls, Hepworth Dixon, Miss Jewsbury, Hayward, and Douglas Jerrold. Lord Campbell, old Rogers, and Cardinal Wiseman frequented her *soirées*, though with the last-named she had waged a pamphlet war over the authenticity of St. Peter’s chair at Rome. Rogers was reported to be engaged to one of Lady Morgan’s attractive nieces, the Miss Clarkes, who often stayed with her. It was in allusion to this rumour that he said, ‘Whenever my name is coupled with that of a young lady in this manner, I make it a point of honour to say I have been refused.’ To the last, we are told, Lady Morgan preserved the natural vivacity and aptness of repartee that had made her the delight of Dublin society half a century

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before. ‘I know I am vain,’ she said once to Mrs. Hall, ‘but I have a right to be. It is not put on and off like my rouge; it is always with me. . . . I wrote books when your mothers worked samplers, and demanded freedom for Ireland when Dan O’Connell scrambled for gulls’ eggs in the crags of Derrynane. . . . Look at the number of books I have written. Did ever woman move in a brighter sphere than I do? I have three invitations to dinner to-day, one from a duchess, one from a countess, and the third from a diplomatist, a very witty man, who keeps the best society in London.’

Lady Morgan was fond of boasting that she had supported herself since she was fourteen (for which read seventeen or eighteen), and insisted on the advantage of giving every girl a profession by which she could earn her living, if the need arose. Speaking to Mrs. Hall on the subject of some girls who had been suddenly bereft of fortune, she exclaimed: ‘They do everything that is fashionable imperfectly; their drawing, singing, dancing, and languages amount to nothing. They were educated to marry, and had they had time, they might have gone off *with*, and hereafter *from*, husbands. I desire to give every girl, no matter her rank, a trade or profession. Cultivate what is necessary to the position she is born to; cultivate all things in moderation, but one thing to perfection, no matter what it is, for which she has a talent: give her a staff to lay hold of; let her feel, “This will carry me through life without dependence.”’

With the assistance of Miss Jewsbury Lady Morgan, in the last years of her life, prepared a volume of reminiscences, which she called *The Odd Volume*. This, which was published in 1859, only deals with a short period of her career, and is of little literary interest. *The Athenæum*,

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in the course of a laudatory review, observed that ‘Lady Morgan had lived through the love, admiration, and malignity of three generations of men, and was, in short, a literary Ninon, who seemed as brisk and captivating in the year 1859 as when George was Prince, and the author of “Kate Kearney” divided the laureateship of society and song with Tom Moore.’

Lady Morgan, though now an octogenarian, was by no means pleased at these remarks. She still prided herself on her fascinations, was never tired and never bored, and looked upon any one who died under a hundred years of age as a suicide. ‘You have more strength and spirit, as well as more genius, than any of us,’ wrote Abraham Hayward to her. ‘We must go back to the brilliant women of the eighteenth century to find anything like a parallel to you and your *soirées*.’ But bronchitis was an enemy with which even her high spirit was powerless to cope. She had an attack in 1858, but threw it off, and on Christmas Day gave a dinner, at which she told Irish stories with all her old vivacity, and sang ‘The Night before Larry was Stretched.’ On St. Patrick’s Day, 1859, she gave a musical matinée, but caught cold the following week, and after a short illness, died on April 16th.

Thus ended the career of one of the most flattered and best abused women of the century. Held up as the Irish Madame de Staël by her admirers, and run down as a monster of impudence and iniquity by her enemies, it is no wonder that her character, by no means innately refined, became hardened, if not coarsened, by so unenviable a notoriety. Still, to her credit be it remembered that she never lost a friend, and that she converted more than one impersonal enmity (as in the case of Jeffrey and Lockhart) into a personal friendship. In

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spite of her passion for the society of the great, she wrote and worked throughout her whole career for the cause of liberty, and she was ever on the side of the oppressed. An incorrigible flirt before marriage, she developed into an irreproachable matron, while her natural frivolity and feather-headedness never tempted her to neglect her work, nor interfered with her faculty for making most advantageous business arrangements. ‘With all her frank vanity,’ we are told, ‘she had shrewd good sense, and she valued herself much more on her industry than on her genius, because the one, she said, she owed to her organisation, but the other was a virtue of her own rearing.’ It would be impossible to conclude a sketch of Lady Morgan more appropriately than by the following lines of Leigh Hunt, which she herself was fond of quoting, and in which her personal idiosyncrasies are pleasantly touched off:—

‘And dear Lady Morgan, see, see, when she comes,  
With her pulses all beating for freedom like drums,  
So Irish, so modish, so mixtish, so wild ;  
So committing herself as she talks—like a child.  
So trim, yet so easy—polite, yet high-hearted,  
That truth and she, try all she can, won’t be parted ;  
She’ll put you your fashions, your latest new air,  
And then talk so frankly, she’ll make you all stare.’



**NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS**









*Art. Supr. Co.*

*Nathaniel Parker Willis.*





# NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS

## PART I

ANY fool, said a wise man, can write an interesting book if he will only take the trouble to set down exactly what he has seen and heard. Unfortunately, it is only a very special kind of fool who is capable of recording exactly what he sees and hears—a rare bird who flourishes perhaps once in a century, and is remembered long after wiser men are forgotten. It is not contended that the subject of this memoir was a fool in the crude sense of the word, though he was responsible for a good deal of folly; but he was inspired by that impertinent curiosity, that happy lack of dignity, and that passion for the trivial and the intimate, which, when joined to a natural talent for observation and a picturesque narrative style, enable the possessor to illuminate a circle and a period in a fashion never achieved by the most learned lucubrations of the profoundest scholars. Thanks to his Boswellising powers, ‘Namby-Pamby Willis,’ as he was called by his numerous enemies, has left an admirably vivid picture of the literary society of London in the ‘thirties,’ a picture that steadily increases in value as the period at which it was painted recedes into the past.

Willis came of a family that had contrived, not unsuccessfully, to combine religion with journalism. His

immediate forebears seem to have been persons of marked individuality, and his pedigree was, for the New World, of quite respectable antiquity. The founder of the family, George Willis, was born early in the seventeenth century, and emigrated to New England about 1730, where he worked at his trade of brickmaking and building. Our hero's great-grandfather was a patriotic sailmaker, who assisted at a certain historic entertainment, when tar, feathers, and hot tea were administered gratis to his Majesty's tax-collector at Boston. His wife, Abigail, was a lady of character and maxims, who saved some tea for her private use when three hundred cases were emptied into Boston Harbour, and exhorted her family never to eat brown bread when they could get white, and never to go in at the back door when they might go in at the front. The son of this worthy couple conducted a Whig newspaper in Boston during the Rebellion, and became one of the pioneer journalists of the West. His son, Nathaniel's sire, was invited, in 1803, to start a newspaper at Portland, Maine, where the future Penciller was born in 1806, one year before his fellow-townsmen Longfellow.

A few years later, Mr. Willis returned to Boston, where, in 1816, he started the *Boston Recorder*, the first newspaper, he was accustomed to say, that had ever been run on religious lines. He seems to have been a respectable, but narrow-minded man, who loved long devotions and many services, and looked upon dancing, card-playing and stage-plays as works of the Evil One. His redeeming points were a sense of humour and a keen appreciation of female beauty, which last characteristic he certainly bequeathed to his son. It was his custom to sit round the fire with his nine children on winter

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evenings, and tell them stories about the old Dutch tiles, representing New Testament scenes, with which the chimney-corner was lined. The success of these informal Scripture lessons led him to establish a religious paper for young people called *The Youth's Companion*, in which some of our hero's early verses appeared. His wife, Hannah Parker, is described as a charming woman, lively, impulsive, and emotional. Her son, Nathaniel, whose devotion to her never wavered, used to say, 'My veins are teeming with the quicksilver spirit my mother gave me.'

Willis the younger was sent to school at Boston, where he had Emerson for a schoolfellow, and afterwards to the university of Yale, where he wrote much poetry, and was well received in the society of the place on account of his good looks, easy manners, and precocious literary reputation. On leaving Yale, he was delivered of a volume of juvenile poems, and then settled down in Boston to four years' journalistic work. Samuel Goodrich, better known in England under his pseudonym of 'Peter Parley,' engaged him to edit some annuals and gift-books, an employment which the young man found particularly congenial. In his *Recollections* Peter Parley draws a comparison between his two contributors, Hawthorne and Willis, and records that everything Willis wrote attracted immediate attention, while the early productions of Hawthorne passed almost unnoticed.

In 1829 Willis started on his own account with the *American Monthly Magazine*, which had an existence of little more than two years. He announced that he could not afford to pay for contributions, as he expected only a small circulation, and he wrote most of the copy himself. Every month there were discursive, gossiping



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editorial articles in that 'personal' vein which has been worked with so much industry in our own day. He took his readers into his confidence, prattled about his japonica and his pastilles, and described his favourite bird, a scarlet trulian, and his dogs, Ugolino and L. E. L., who slept in the waste-paper basket. He professed to write with a bottle of Rudesheimer and a plate of olives at his elbow, and it was hinted that he ate fruit in summer with an amber-handled fork to keep his palm cool!

These youthful affectations had a peculiarly exasperating effect upon men of a different type; and Willis became the butt of the more old-fashioned critics, who vied with each other in inventing opprobrious epithets to shower upon the head of this young puppy of journalism. However, Nathaniel was not a person who could easily be suppressed, and he soon became one of the most popular magazine-writers of his time, his prose being described by an admirer as 'delicate and brief like a white jacket—transparent like a lump of sugar in champagne—soft-tempered like the sea-breeze at night.' Unfortunately, the magazines paid but little, even for prose of the above description, and Willis presently found himself in financial difficulties; while, with all his acknowledged fascinations, he was unlucky in his first love-affair. He became engaged to a beautiful girl called Mary Benham, but her guardian broke off the match, and the lady, who seems to have had an inclination for literary men, afterwards married Motley, the historian of the Dutch Republic.

In 1831 the *American Monthly Magazine* ceased to appear, and Willis, leaving Boston and his creditors without regret, obtained the post of assistant-editor on the *New York Mirror*, a weekly paper devoted to

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literature, light fiction, and the fine arts. It was the property of Morris, author of the once world-famous song, 'Woodman, spare that Tree,' and the editor-in-chief was Theodore Fay, a novelist of some distinction. Soon after his appointment it was decided that Willis should be sent to Europe as foreign correspondent of his paper. A sum of about a hundred pounds was scraped together for his expenses, and it was arranged that he should write weekly letters at the rate of two guineas a letter. In the autumn of 1831 he sailed in a merchant-vessel for Havre, whence he journeyed to Paris in November. Here he spent the first five or six months of his tour, and here began the series of 'Pencilings by the Way,' a portion of which gained him rather an unwelcome notoriety in English society by reason of the 'personalities' it contained. When published in book form the Pencilings were considerably toned down, and the proper names were represented by initials, so that people who read them then for the first time wondered what all the excitement had been about. As the chapters which relate to England are of most interest to English readers, Willis's continental adventures need only be briefly noticed. The extracts here quoted are taken from the original letters as they appeared in the *New York Mirror*, which differ in many respects from the version that was published in London after the attack by the *Quarterly Review*.

In Paris Willis found himself in his element, and was made much of by the Anglo-French community, which was then under the special patronage of Lafayette. One of the most interesting of his new acquaintances was the Countess Guiccioli, upon whose appearance and manners he comments with characteristic frankness.

‘I met the Guiccioli yesterday in the Tuileries,’ he writes shortly after his arrival. ‘She looks much younger than I anticipated, and is a handsome blonde, apparently about thirty. I am told by a gentleman who knows her that she has become a great flirt, and is quite spoiled by admiration. The celebrity of Lord Byron’s attachment would certainly make her a very desirable acquaintance were she much less pretty than she really is, and I am told her drawing-room is thronged with lovers of all nations contending for a preference which, having once been given, should be buried, I think, for ever.’ A little later he has himself been introduced to the Guiccioli, and he describes an interview which he has had with her, when the conversation turned upon her friendship with Shelley.

‘She gave me one of his letters to herself as an autograph,’ he narrates. ‘She says he was at times a little crazy—*fou*, as she expressed it—but there never was a nobler or a better man. Lord Byron, she says, loved him as a brother. . . . There were several miniatures of Byron hanging up in the room; I asked her if any of them were perfect in the resemblance. “No,” she said, “that is the most like him,” taking down a miniature by an Italian artist, “*mais il était beaucoup plus beau—beaucoup—beaucoup*.” She reiterated the word with a very touching tenderness, and continued to look at the portrait for some time. . . . She went on talking of the painters who had drawn Byron, and said the American, West’s, was the best likeness. I did not tell her that West’s portrait of herself was excessively flattered. I am sure no one would know her, from the engraving at least. Her cheek-bones are high, her forehead is badly shaped, and altogether the frame of her features is

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decidedly ugly. She dresses in the worst taste too, and yet for all this, and poetry and celebrity aside, the countess is both a lovely and a fascinating woman, and one whom a man of sentiment would admire at this age very sincerely, but not for beauty.'

The cholera frightened Willis away from Paris in April, but before he left, the United States minister, Mr. Rives, appointed him honorary attaché to his own embassy, a great social advantage to the young man, who was thereby enabled to obtain the *entrée* into court circles in every country that he visited. At the same time the appointment somewhat misled his numerous new acquaintances on the subject of his social position, while the 'spurious' attachéship afterwards became a weapon in the hands of his enemies. However, for the time being, the young correspondent thoroughly enjoyed his novel experiences, and contrived to communicate his enjoyment to his readers. His letters were eagerly read by his countrymen, and are said to have been copied into no less than five hundred newspapers. He eschewed useful information, gave impressions rather than statistics, and was fairly successful in avoiding the style of the guide-book. The summer and autumn of 1832 were spent in northern Italy, Florence being the traveller's headquarters. He had letters of introduction to half the Italian nobility, and was made welcome in the court circles of Tuscany. In the autumn he was flirting at the Baths of Lucca, and at this time he had formed a project of travelling to London by way of Switzerland.

'In London,' he writes to his sister, 'I mean to make arrangements with the magazines, and then live abroad altogether. It costs so little here, and one lives so luxuriously too, and there is so much to fill one's mind

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and eye, that I think of returning to naked America with ever-increasing repugnance. I love my country, but the *ornamental* is my vocation, and of this she has none.' This programme was changed, and Willis spent the winter between Rome, Florence, and Venice. Wherever he went he made friends, but his progress was in itself a feat of diplomacy, and few people dreamt that the dashing young attaché depended for his living upon his contributions to a newspaper, payment for which did not always arrive with desirable punctuality. 'I have dined,' he writes to his mother, 'with a prince one day, and alone in a cook-shop the next.' He explains that he can live on about sixty pounds a year at Florence, paying four or five shillings a week for his rooms, breakfasting for fourpence, and dining quite magnificently for a shilling.

In June 1833, Willis was invited by the officers of an American frigate to accompany them on a six months' cruise in the Mediterranean. This was far too good an offer to be refused, since it would have been impossible to get a peep at the East under more ideal conditions of travel. Willis's letters from Greece and Turkey are among the best and happiest that he wrote, for the weather was perfect, the company was pleasant (there were ladies on board), and the reception they met with wherever they weighed anchor was most hospitable; while the Oriental mode of life appealed to our hero's highly-coloured, romantic taste. In the island of Ægina he was introduced to Byron's Maid of Athens, once the beautiful Teresa Makri, now plain Mrs. Black, with an ugly little boy, and a Scotch terrier that snapped at the traveller's heels. He describes the *ci-devant* Maid of Athens as a handsome woman, with a clear dark skin, and a nose

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and forehead that formed the straight line of the Greek model.

‘Her eyes are large,’ he continues, ‘and of a soft, liquid hazel, and this is her chief beauty. There is that looking out of the soul through them which Byron always described as constituting the loveliness that most moved him. . . . We met her as simple Mrs. Black, whose husband’s terrier had worried us at the door, and we left her feeling that the poetry she called forth from the heart of Byron was her due by every law of loveliness.’

By this time the fame of the *Pencillings* had reached London; and at Smyrna Willis found a letter awaiting him from the *Morning Herald*, which contained an offer of the post of foreign correspondent at a salary of £200 a year. But as his letters would have to be mainly political, and as he might be expected to act as war-correspondent, which was scarcely in his line, he decided to refuse the offer. On leaving the frigate he loitered through Italy, Switzerland, and France to England, arriving at Dover on June 1, 1834. While at Florence he had made the acquaintance of Walter Savage Landor, who had given him some valuable letters of introduction to people in England, among them one to Lady Blessington. Landor also put into Willis’s hands a package of books, whose temporary disappearance through some mismanagement roused the formidable wrath of the old poet. In his *Letter to an Author*, printed at the end of *Pericles and Aspasia*, Landor describes the transaction (which related to an American edition of the *Imaginary Conversations*), and continues:—

‘I regret the appearance of his book (the *Pencillings by the Way*) more than the disappearance of mine. . . .

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My letter of presentation to Lady Blessington threw open (I am afraid) too many folding-doors, some of which have been left rather uncomfortably ajar. No doubt his celebrity as a poet, and his dignity as a diplomatist, would have procured him all those distinctions in society which he allowed so humble a person as myself the instrumentality of conferring. Greatly as I have been flattered by the visits of American gentlemen, I hope that for the future no penciller of similar composition will deviate in my favour to the right hand of the road from Florence to Fiesole.'

The end of this storm in a teacup was that the books, which had safely arrived in New York, returned as safely to London, where they were handed over to their rightful owner, but not in time, as Willis complained, to keep him from going down to posterity astride the finis to *Pericles and Aspasia*. Long afterwards he expressed his hope that Landor's biographers would either let him slip off at Lethe's wharf, or else do him justice in a note. Before this unfortunate incident, Landor and Willis had corresponded on cordial terms. The old poet wrote to say how much he envied his correspondent the evenings he passed in the society of 'the most accomplished and graceful of all our fashionable world, my excellent friend, Lady Blessington,' while the American could not sufficiently express his gratitude for the introduction to that lady, 'my lodestar and most valued friend,' as he called her, 'for whose acquaintance I am so much indebted to you, that you will find it difficult in your lifetime to diminish my obligations.'

Willis seems to have arrived in England prepared to like everything English, and he began by falling in love with the Ship Hotel at Dover, 'with its bells that *would*

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ring, doors that *would* shut, blazing coal fires [on June 1], and its landlady who spoke English, and was civil—a greater contrast to the Continent could hardly be imagined.’ The next morning he was in raptures over the coach that took him to London, with its light harness, four beautiful bays, and dashing coachman, who discussed the Opera, and hummed airs from the *Puritani*. He saw a hundred charming spots on the road that he coveted with quite a heartache, and even the little houses and gardens in the suburbs pleased his taste—there was such an *affectionateness* in the outside of every one of them. Regent Street he declares to be the finest street he has ever seen, and he exclaims, ‘The Toledo of Naples, the Corso of Rome, the Rue de la Paix, and the Boulevards of Paris are really nothing to Regent Street.’

Willis called on Lady Blessington in the afternoon of the day after his arrival, but was informed that her ladyship was not yet down to breakfast. An hour later, however, he received a note from her inviting him to call the same evening at ten o’clock. She was then living at Seamore House, while D’Orsay had lodgings in Curzon Street. Willis tells us that he found a very beautiful woman exquisitely dressed, who looked on the sunny side of thirty, though she frankly owned to forty, and was, in fact, forty-five. Lady Blessington received the young American very cordially, introduced him to the magnificent D’Orsay, and plunged at once into literary talk. She was curious to know the degree of popularity enjoyed by English authors in America, more especially by Bulwer and D’Israeli, both of whom she promised that he should meet at her house.

‘D’Israeli the elder,’ she said, ‘came here with his son



the other night. It would have delighted you to see the old man's pride in him. As he was going away, he patted him on the head, and said, "Take care of him, Lady Blessington, for my sake. He is a clever lad, but wants ballast. I am glad he has the honour to know you, for you will check him sometimes when I am away. . . ." D'Israeli the younger is quite his own character of Vivian Grey, crowded with talent, but very *soigné* of his curls, and a bit of a coxcomb. There is no reverse about him, however, and he is the only *joyous* dandy I ever saw.' Then the conversation turned upon Byron, and Willis asked if Lady Blessington had known La Guiccioli. 'No; we were at Pisa when they were together,' she replied. 'But though Lord Blessington had the greatest curiosity to see her, Lord Byron would never permit it. "She has a red head of her own," said he, "and don't like to show it." Byron treated the poor creature dreadfully ill. She feared more than she loved him.'

On concluding this account of his visit, Willis observes that there can be no objection to his publishing such personal descriptions and anecdotes in an American periodical, since 'the English just know of our existence, and if they get an idea twice a year of our progress in politics, they are comparatively well informed. Our periodical literature is never even heard of. I mention this fact lest, at first thought, I might seem to have abused the hospitality or the frankness of those on whom letters of introduction have given me claims for civility.' Alas, poor Willis! He little thought that one of the most distinguished and most venomous of British critics would make a long arm across the Atlantic, and hold up his prattlings to ridicule and condemnation.

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The following evening our Penciller met a distinguished company at Seamore House, the two Bulwers, Edward and Henry ; James Smith of 'Rejected Addresses' fame ; Fonblanque, the editor of the *Examiner* ; and the young Duc de Richelieu. Of Fonblanque, Willis observes : 'I never saw a worse face, sallow, seamed, and hollow, his teeth irregular, his skin livid, his straight black hair uncombed. A hollow, croaking voice, and a small, fiery black eye, with a smile like a skeleton's, certainly did not improve his physiognomy.' Fonblanque, as might have been anticipated, did not at all appreciate this description of his personal defects, when it afterwards appeared in print. Edward Bulwer was quite unlike what Willis had expected. 'He is short,' he writes, 'very much bent, slightly knock-kneed, and as ill-dressed a man for a gentleman as you will find in London. . . . He has a retreating forehead, large aquiline nose, immense red whiskers, and a mouth contradictory of all talent. A more good-natured, habitually smiling, nerveless expression could hardly be imagined.' Bulwer seems to have made up for his appearance by his high spirits, lover-like voice, and delightful conversation, some of which our Boswell has reported.

'Smith asked Bulwer if he kept an amanuensis. "No," he said, "I scribble it all out myself, and send it to the press in a most ungentlemanlike hand, half print, half hieroglyphics, with all its imperfections on its head, and correct in the proof—very much to the dissatisfaction of the publisher, who sends me in a bill of £16, 6s. 4d. for extra corrections. Then I am free to confess I don't know grammar. Lady Blessington, do you know grammar? There never was such a thing heard of before Lindley Murray. I wonder what they did for

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grammar before his day! Oh, the delicious blunders one sees when they are irretrievable! And the best of it is the critics never get hold of them. Thank Heaven for second editions, that one may scratch out one's blots, and go down clean and gentlemanlike to posterity." Smith asked him if he had ever reviewed one of his own books. "No, but I could! And then how I should like to recriminate, and defend myself indignantly! I think I could be preciously severe. Depend upon it, nobody knows a book's faults so well as its author. I have a great idea of criticising my books for my posthumous memoirs. Shall I, Smith? Shall I, Lady Blessington?"

Willis fell into conversation with the good-natured, though gouty James Smith, who talked to him of America, and declared that there never was so delightful a fellow as Washington Irving. 'I was once,' he said, 'taken down with him into the country by a merchant to dinner. Our friend stopped his carriage at the gate of his park, and asked if we would walk through the grounds to the house. Irving refused, and held me down by the coat-tails, so that we drove on to the house together, leaving our host to follow on foot. "I make it a principle," said Irving, "never to walk with a man through his own grounds. I have no idea of praising a thing whether I like it or not. You and I will do them to-morrow by ourselves."' 'The Rejected Addresses,' continues Willis, 'got on his crutches about three o'clock in the morning, and I made my exit with the rest, thanking Heaven that, though in a strange country, my mother-tongue was the language of its men of genius.'

One of the most interesting passages in the *Pencillings* is that in which Willis describes a breakfast at Crabb

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Robinson's chambers in the Temple, where he met Charles and Mary Lamb, a privilege which he seems thoroughly to have appreciated. 'I never in my life,' he declares, 'had an invitation more to my taste. The *Essays of Elia* are certainly the most charming things in the world, and it has been, for the last ten years, my highest compliment to the literary taste of a friend to present him with a copy. . . . I arrived half an hour before Lamb, and had time to learn something of his peculiarities. Some family circumstances have tended to depress him of late years, and unless excited by convivial intercourse, he never shows a trace of what he once was. He is excessively given to mystifying his friends, and is never so delighted as when he has persuaded some one into a belief in one of his grave inventions. . . . There was a rap at the door at last, and enter a gentleman in black small - clothes and gaiters, short and very slight in his person, his hair just sprinkled with grey, a beautiful, deep-set, grey eye, aquiline nose, and a very indescribable mouth. His sister, whose literary reputation is very closely associated with her brother's, came in after him. She is a small, bent figure, evidently a victim to ill-health, and hears with difficulty. Her face has been, I should think, a fine, handsome one, and her bright grey eye is still full of intelligence and fire. . . .

'I had set a large arm-chair for Miss Lamb. "Don't take it, Mary," said Lamb, pulling it away from her very gravely. "It looks as if you were going to have a tooth drawn." The conversation was very local, but perhaps in this way I saw more of the author, for his manner of speaking of their mutual friends, and the quaint humour with which he complained of one, and spoke well of

another, was so completely in the vein of his inimitable writings, that I could have fancied myself listening to an audible composition of new *Elia*. Nothing could be more delightful than the kindness and affection between the brother and sister, though Lamb was continually taking advantage of her deafness to mystify her on every topic that was started. "Poor Mary," he said, "she hears all of an epigram but the point." "What are you saying of me, Charles?" she asked. "Mr. Willis," said he, raising his voice, "adores your *Confessions of a Drunkard* very much, and I was saying that it was no merit of yours that you understood the subject."

'The conversation presently turned upon literary topics, and Lamb observed: "I don't know much of your American authors. Mary, there, devours Cooper's novels with a ravenous appetite with which I have no sympathy. The only American book I ever read twice was the *Journal of Edward Woolman*, a Quaker preacher and tinker, whose character is one of the finest I ever met. He tells a story or two about negro slaves that brought the tears into my eyes. I can read no prose now, though Hazlitt sometimes, to be sure—but then Hazlitt is worth all the modern prose-writers put together." I mentioned having bought a copy of *Elia* the last day I was in America, to send as a parting gift to one of the most lovely and talented women in the country. "What did you give for it?" asked Lamb. "About seven-and-six." "Permit me to pay you that," said he, and with the utmost earnestness he counted the money out on the table. "I never yet wrote anything that would sell," he continued. "I am the publisher's ruin. My last poem won't sell a copy. Have you seen it, Mr. Willis?" I had not. "It is only eighteenpence, and I'll give you

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sixpence towards it," and he described to me where I should find it sticking up in a shop-window in the Strand.

'Lamb ate nothing, and complained in a querulous tone of the veal pie. There was a kind of potted fish, which he had expected that our friend would procure for him. He inquired whether there was not a morsel left in the bottom of the last pot. Mr. Robinson was not sure. "Send and see," said Lamb, "and if the pot has been cleaned, bring me the lid. I think the sight of it would do me good." The cover was brought, upon which there was a picture of the fish. Lamb kissed it with a reproachful look at his friend, and then left the table and began to wander round the room with a broken, uncertain step, as if he almost forgot to put one leg before the other. His sister rose after a while, and commenced walking up and down in the same manner on the opposite side of the table, and in the course of half an hour they took their leave.' Landor, in commenting on this passage, says it is evident that Willis 'fidgeted the Lambs,' and seems rather unaccountably annoyed at his having alluded to Crabb Robinson simply as 'a barrister.'

In London Willis appears to have fallen upon his feet from the very first. To the end of his life he looked back upon his first two years in England as the happiest and most successful period in his whole career. It was small wonder that he became a little dazzled and intoxicated by the brilliancy of his surroundings, which spoilt him for the homelier conditions of American life. 'What a star is mine,' he wrote to his sister Julia, three days after landing at Dover. 'All the best society of London exclusives is now open to me—*me!* without a sou in my pocket beyond what my pen brings me, and with not only no influence from friends at home, but with a world

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of envy and slander at my back. . . . In a literary way I have already had offers from the *Court Magazine*, the *Metro-politan*, and the *New Monthly*, of the first price for my articles. I sent a short tale, written in one day, to the *Court Magazine*, and they gave me eight guineas for it at once. I lodge in Cavendish Square, the most fashionable part of the town, paying a guinea a week for my lodgings, and am as well off as if I had been the son of the President.'

Willis was constantly at Lady Blessington's house, where he met some of the best masculine society of the day. At one dinner-party among his fellow-guests were D'Israeli, Bulwer, Procter (Barry Cornwall), Lord Durham, and Sir Martin Shee. It was his first sight of Dizzy, whom he found looking out of the window with the last rays of sunlight reflected on the gorgeous gold flowers of an embroidered waistcoat. A white stick with a black cord and tassel, and a quantity of chains about his neck and pocket, rendered him rather a conspicuous object. 'D'Israeli,' says our chronicler, 'has one of the most remarkable faces I ever saw. He is vividly pale, and but for the energy of his action and the strength of his lungs, would seem a victim to consumption. His eye is as black as Erebus, and has the most mocking, lying-in-wait expression conceivable. His mouth is alive with a kind of impatient nervousness, and when he has burst forth with a particularly successful cataract of expression, it assumes a curl of triumphant scorn that would be worthy of Mephistopheles. A thick, heavy mass of jet-black ringlets falls over his left cheek almost to his collarless stock, while on the right temple it is parted and put away with the smooth carefulness of a girl's, and shines most unctuously with "thy incomparable oil, Macassar."' Willis was always interested in dress,

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being himself a born dandy, and he was inclined to judge a man by the cut of his coat and the set of his hat. On this occasion he remarks that Bulwer was very badly dressed as usual, while Count D'Orsay was very splendid, but quite indefinable. 'He seemed showily dressed till you looked to particulars, and then it seemed only a simple thing well fitted to a very magnificent person.'

The conversation ran at first on Sir Henry Taylor's new play, *Philip van Artevelde*, which the company thought overrated, and then passed to Beckford, of *Vathek* fame, who had already retired from the world, and was living at Bath in his usual eccentric fashion. Dizzy was the only person present who had met him, and, declares Willis, 'I might as well attempt to gather up the foam of the sea as to convey an idea of the extraordinary language in which he clothed his description. There were at least five words in every sentence which must have been very much astonished at the use to which they were put, and yet no others apparently could so well have conveyed his idea. He talked like a racehorse approaching the winning-post, every muscle in action, and the utmost energy of expression flowing out in every burst. It is a great pity he is not in Parliament.'

At midnight Lady Blessington left the table, when the conversation took a political turn, but D'Israeli soon dashed off again with a story of an Irish dragoon who was killed in the Peninsular. 'His arm was shot off, and he was bleeding to death. When told he could not live, he called for a large silver goblet, out of which he usually drank his claret. He held it to the gushing artery, and filled it to the brim, then poured it slowly out upon the ground, saying, "If that had been shed for old Ireland." You can have no idea how thrillingly this little story was



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told. Fonblanque, however, who is a cold political satirist, could see nothing in a man's "decanting his claret" that was in the least sublime, so "Vivian Grey" got into a passion, and for a while was silent.'

Willis was now fairly launched in London society, literary and fashionable. He went to the Opera to hear Grisi, then young and pretty, and Lady Blessington pointed out the beautiful Mrs. Norton, looking like a queen, and Lord Brougham flirting desperately with a lovely woman, 'his mouth going with the convulsive twitch that so disfigures him, and his most unsightly of pug-noses in the strongest relief against the red lining of the box.' He breakfasted with 'Barry Cornwall,' whose poetry he greatly admired, and was introduced to the charming Mrs. Procter and the 'yellow-tressed Adelaide,' then only eight or nine years old. Procter gave his visitor a volume of his own poems, and told him anecdotes of the various authors he had known, Hazlitt, Lamb, Keats, and Shelley. Another interesting entertainment was an evening party at Edward Bulwer's house. Willis arrived at eleven, and found his hostess alone, playing with a King Charles' spaniel, while she awaited her guests.

'The author of *Pelham*,' he writes, 'is a younger son, and depends on his writings for a livelihood; and truly, measuring works of fancy by what they will bring, a glance round his luxurious rooms is worth reams of puffs in the *Quarterlies*. He lives in the heart of fashionable London, entertains a great deal, and is expensive in all his habits, and for this pay Messrs. Clifford, Pelham, and Aram—most excellent bankers. As I looked at the beautiful woman before me, waiting to receive the rank and fashion of London, I thought that close-fisted old literature never had better reason for his partial largess.'

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Willis was astonished at the neglect with which the female portion of the assemblage was treated, no young man ever speaking to a young lady except to ask her to dance. 'There they sit with their mammas,' he observes, 'their hands before them in the received attitude; and if there happens to be no dancing, looking at a print, or eating an ice, is for them the most entertaining circumstance of the evening. Late in the evening a charming girl, who is the reigning belle of Naples, came in with her mother from the Opera, and I made this same remark to her. "I detest England for that very reason," she said frankly. "It is the fashion in London for young men to prefer everything to the society of women. They have their clubs, their horses, their rowing matches, their hunting, and everything else is a *bore*! How different are the same men at Naples! They can never get enough of one there." . . . She mentioned several of the beaux of last winter who had returned to England. "Here have I been in London a month, and these very men who were at my side all day on the Strada Nuova, and all but fighting to dance three times with me of an evening, have only left their cards. Not because they care less about me, but because it is not the fashion—it would be talked about at the clubs; it is *knowing* to let us alone."'

There were only three men at the party, according to Willis, who could come under the head of *beaux*, but there were many distinguished persons. There was Byron's sister, Mrs. Leigh, a thin, plain, middle-aged woman, of a serious countenance, but with very cordial, pleasing manners. Sheil, the famous Irish orator, small, dark, deceitful, and talented-looking, with a squeaky voice, was to be seen in earnest conversation with the courtly old

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Lord Clarendon. Fonblanque, with his pale, dislocated-looking face, was making the amiable, with a ghastly smile, to Lady Stepney, author of *The Road to Ruin* and other fashionable novels. The bilious Lord Durham, with his Brutus head and severe countenance, high-bred in appearance in spite of the worst possible coat and trousers, was talking politics with Bowring. Prince Moscowa, son of Marshal Ney, a plain, determined-looking young man, was unconscious of everything but the presence of the lovely Mrs. Leicester Stanhope. Her husband, afterwards Sir Leicester, who had been Byron's companion in Greece, was introduced to Willis, and the two soon became on intimate terms.

In the course of the season Willis made the acquaintance of Miss Mitford, who invited him to spend a week with her at her cottage near Reading. In a letter to her friend, Miss Jephson, Miss Mitford says: 'I also like very much Mr. Willis, an American author, who is now understood to be here to publish his account of England. He is a very elegant young man, more like one of the best of our peers' sons than a rough republican.' The admiration was apparently mutual, for Willis, in a letter to the author of *Our Village*, says: 'You are distinguished in the world as the "gentlewoman" among authoresses, as you are for your rank merely in literature. I have often thought you very enviable for the universality of that opinion about you. You share it with Sir Philip Sidney, who was in his day the *gentleman* among authors. I look with great interest for your new tragedy. I think your mind is essentially dramatic; and in that, in our time, you are alone. I know no one else who could have written *Rienzi*, and I felt *Charles I.* to my fingers' ends, as one feels no other modern play.'

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Willis was less happy in his relations with Harriet Martineau, to whom he was introduced just before her departure for America. 'While I was preparing for my travels,' she writes, in her own account of the interview, 'an acquaintance brought a buxom gentleman, whom he introduced under the name of Willis. There was something rather engaging in the round face, brisk air, and *enjouement* of the young man; but his conscious dandyism and unparalleled self-complacency spoiled the satisfaction, though they increased the inclination to laugh. . . . He whipped his bright little boot with his bright little cane, while he ran over the names of all his distinguished fellow-countrymen, and declared that he would send me letters to them all.' Miss Martineau further relates that the few letters she presented met with a very indifferent reception. Her indignation increased when she found that in his private correspondence Willis had given the impression that she was one of his most intimate friends. In his own account of the interview he merely says: 'I was taken by the clever translator of *Faust* to see the celebrated Miss Martineau. She has perhaps at this moment the most general and enviable reputation in England, and is the only one of the literary clique whose name is mentioned without some envious qualification.'

A budget of literary news sent to the *Mirror* includes such items as that 'D'Israeli is driving about in an open carriage with Lady S., looking more melancholy than usual. The absent baronet, whose place he fills, is about to bring an action against him, which will finish his career, unless he can coin the damages in his brain. Mrs. Hemans is dying of consumption in Ireland. I have been passing a week at a country-house, where Miss Jane

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Porter [author of *Scottish Chiefs*] and Miss Pardoe [author of *Beauties of the Bosphorus*] were staying. Miss Porter is one of her own heroines grown old, a still noble wreck of beauty. . . . Dined last week with Joanna Baillie at Hampstead—the most charming old lady I ever saw. To-day I dine with Longman, to meet Tom Moore, who is living *incog.* near this Nestor of publishers, and pegging hard at his *History of Ireland*. . . . Lady Blessington's new book makes a great noise. Living as she does twelve hours out of the twenty-four in the midst of the most brilliant and intellectually exhausting circle in London, I only wonder how she found time to write it. Yet it was written in six weeks! Her novels sell for a hundred pounds more than any other author's, except Bulwer's. Bulwer gets £1400; Lady Blessington, £400; Mrs. Norton, £250; Lady Charlotte Bury, £200; Grattan, £300; and most other authors below this. Captain Marryat's gross trash sells immensely about Wapping and Portsmouth, and brings him in £500 or £600 the book—but that can scarce be called literature. D'Israeli cannot sell a book *at all*, I hear. Is not that odd? I would give more for one of his books than for forty of the common saleable things about town.'

One more description of a literary dinner at Lady Blessington's may be quoted before Willis's account of this, his first and most memorable London season, is brought to an end. Among the company on this occasion were Moore, D'Israeli, and Dr. Beattie, the King's physician, who was himself a poet. Moore had been ruralising for a year at Slopperton Cottage, and, before his arrival, D'Israeli expressed his regret that he should have been met on his return to town with a savage article in *Fraser* on his supposed plagiarisms. Lady Blessington

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declared that he would never see it, since he guarded himself against the sight and knowledge of criticism as other people guarded against the plague. Some one remarked on Moore's passion for rank. 'He was sure to have five or six invitations to dine on the same day,' it was said, 'and he tormented himself with the idea that he had perhaps not accepted the most exclusive. He would get off from an engagement with a countess to dine with a marchioness, and from a marchioness to accept the invitation of a duchess. As he cared little for the society of men, and would sing and be delightful only for the applause of women, it mattered little whether one circle was more talented than another.'

At length Mr. Moore was announced, and the poet, 'sliding his little feet up to Lady Blessington, made his compliments with an ease and gaiety, combined with a kind of worshipping deference, that were worthy of a prime minister at the Court of Love. . . . His eyes still sparkle like a champagne bubble, though the invader has drawn his pencillings about the corners; and there is a kind of wintry red that seems enamelled on his cheek, the eloquent record of the claret his wit has brightened. His mouth is the most characteristic feature of all. The lips are delicately cut, and as changeable as an aspen; but there is a set-up look about the lower lip—a determination of the muscle to a particular expression, and you fancy that you can see wit astride upon it. It is arch, confident, and half diffident, as if he were disguising his pleasure at applause, while another bright gleam of fancy was breaking upon him. The slightly tossed nose confirms the fun of his expression, and altogether it is a face that sparkles, beams, and radiates.'

The conversation at dinner that night was the most

brilliant that the American had yet heard in London. Sir Walter Scott was the first subject of discussion, Lady Blessington having just received from Sir William Gell the manuscript of a volume on the last days of Sir Walter Scott, a melancholy chronicle of ruined health and weakened intellect, which was afterwards suppressed. Moore then described a visit he had paid to Abbotsford, when his host was in his prime. 'Scott,' he said, 'was the most manly and natural character in the world. His hospitality was free and open as the day; he lived freely himself, and expected his guests to do the same. . . . He never ate or drank to excess, but he had no system; his constitution was Herculean, and he denied himself nothing. I went once from a dinner-party at Sir Thomas Lawrence's to meet Scott at another house. We had hardly entered the room when we were set down to a hot supper of roast chicken, salmon, punch, etc., and Sir Walter ate immensely of everything. What a contrast between this and the last time I saw him in London! He had come to embark for Italy, quite broken down both in mind and body. He gave Mrs. Moore a book, and I asked him if he would make it more valuable by writing in it. He thought I meant that he should write some verses, and said, "I never write poetry now." I asked him to write only his name and hers, and he attempted it, but it was quite illegible.'

O'Connell next became the topic of conversation, and Moore declared that he would be irresistible if it were not for two blots on his character, viz. the contributions in Ireland for his support, and his refusal to give satisfaction to the man he was willing to attack. 'They may say what they will of duelling,' he continued, 'but it is the great preserver of the decencies of society. The old

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school which made a man responsible for his words was the better.' Moore related how O'Connell had accepted Peel's challenge, and then delayed a meeting on the ground of his wife's illness, till the law interfered. Another Irish patriot refused a meeting on account of the illness of his daughter, whereupon a Dublin wit composed the following epigram upon the two :—

‘Some men with a horror of slaughter,  
Improve on the Scripture command,  
And honour their—wife and their daughter—  
That their days may be long in the land.’

Alluding to Grattan's dying advice to his son, ‘Always be ready with the pistol,’ Moore asked, ‘Is it not wonderful that, with all the agitation in Ireland, we have had no such men since his time? The whole country in convulsion—people's lives, fortune, religion at stake, and not a gleam of talent from one's year's end to another. It is natural for sparks to be struck out in a time of violence like this—but Ireland, for all that is worth living for, *is dead*! You can scarcely reckon Sheil of the calibre of the spirits of old, and O'Connell, with all his faults, stands alone in his glory.’

In the drawing-room, after dinner, some allusion to the later Platonists caused D'Israeli to flare up. His wild black eyes glistened, and his nervous lips poured out eloquence, while a whole ottomanful of noble exquisites listened in amazement. He gave an account of Thomas Taylor, one of the last of the Platonists, who had worshipped Jupiter in a back-parlour in London a few years before. In his old age he was turned out of his lodgings, for attempting, as he said, to worship his gods according to the dictates of his conscience, his landlady having



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objected to his sacrificing a bull to Jupiter in her parlour. The company laughed at this story as a good invention, but Dizzy assured them it was literally true, and gave his father as his authority. Meanwhile Moore 'went glittering on' with criticisms upon Grisi and the Opera, and the subject of music being thus introduced, he was led, with great difficulty, to the piano. Willis describes his singing as 'a kind of admirable recitative, in which every shade of thought is syllabled and dwelt upon, and the sentiment of the song goes through your blood, warming you to the very eyelids, and starting your tears if you have a soul or sense in you. I have heard of women fainting at a song of Moore's; and if the burden of it answered by chance to a secret in the bosom of the listener, I should think that the heart would break with it. After two or three songs of Lady Blessington's choice, he rambled over the keys a while, and then sang 'When first I met thee' with a pathos that beggars description. When the last word had faltered out, he rose and took Lady Blessington's hand, said Good-night, and was gone before a word was uttered. For a full minute after he closed the door no one spoke. I could have wished for myself to drop silently asleep where I sat, with the tears in my eyes and the softness upon my heart.'

## PART II

HAVING received invitations to stay with Lord Dalhousie and the Duke of Gordon, Willis went north at the begin-

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ning of September, 1834. The nominal attraction of Scotland he found, rather to his dismay, was the shooting. The guest, he observes, on arriving at a country-house, is asked whether he prefers a flint or a percussion lock, and a double-barrelled Manton is put into his hands; while after breakfast the ladies leave the table, wishing him good sport. 'I would rather have gone to the library,' says the Penciller. 'An aversion to walking, except upon smooth flag-stones, a poetical tenderness on the subject of putting birds "out of their misery," and hands much more at home with the goose-quill than the gun, were some of my private objections to the order of the day.' At Dalhousie, the son of the house, Lord Ramsay, and his American visitor were mutually astonished at each other's appearance when they met in the park, prepared for a morning's sport.

'From the elegant Oxonian I had seen at breakfast,' writes Willis, 'he (Lord Ramsay) was transformed into a figure something rougher than his Highland dependant, in a woollen shooting-jacket, pockets of any number and capacity, trousers of the coarsest plaid, hobnailed shoes and leather gaiters, and a habit of handling his gun that would have been respected on the Mississippi. My own appearance in high-heeled French boots and other corresponding gear, for a tramp over stubble and marsh, amused him equally; but my wardrobe was exclusively metropolitan, and there was no alternative.' It was hard and exciting work, the novice discovered, to trudge through peas, beans, turnips, and corn, soaked with showers, and muddied to the knees till his Parisian boots were reduced to the consistency of brown paper. He came home, much to his own relief, without having brought the blood of his host's son and heir on his

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head, and he made a mental note never to go to Scotland again without hobnailed boots and a shooting-jacket.

On leaving Dalhousie Willis spent a few days in Edinburgh, where he breakfasted with Professor Wilson, *alias* Christopher North. The Professor, he says, talked away famously, quite oblivious of the fact that the tea was made, and the breakfast-dishes were smoking on the table. He spoke much of Blackwood, who then lay dying, and described him as a man of the most refined literary taste, whose opinion of a book he would trust before that of any one he knew. Wilson inquired if his guest had made the acquaintance of Lockhart. 'I have not,' replied Willis. 'He is almost the only literary man in London I have not met; and I must say, as the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, and the most unfair and unprincipled critic of the day, I have no wish to know him. I never heard him well spoken of. I have probably met a hundred of his acquaintances, but I have not yet seen one who pretended to be his friend.' Wilson defended the absent one, who, he said, was the mildest and most unassuming of men, and dissected a book for pleasure, without thinking of the feelings of the author.

The breakfast had been cooling for an hour when the Professor leant back, with his chair still towards the fire, and 'seizing the teapot as if it were a sledge-hammer, he poured from one cup to the other without interrupting the stream, overrunning both cup and saucer, and partly flooding the tea-tray. He then set the cream towards me with a carelessness that nearly overset it, and in trying to reach an egg from the centre of the table, broke two. He took no notice of his own awkwardness, but

drank his cup of tea at a single draught, ate his egg in the same expeditious manner, and went on talking of the "Noctes," and Lockhart, and Blackwood, as if eating his breakfast were rather a troublesome parenthesis in his conversation.' Wilson offered to give his guest letters to Wordsworth and Southey, if he intended to return by the Lakes. 'I lived a long time in their neighbourhood,' he said, 'and know Wordsworth perhaps as well as any one. Many a day I have walked over the hills with him, and listened to his repetition of his own poetry, which, of course, filled my mind completely at the time, and perhaps started the poetical vein in me, though I cannot agree with the critics that my poetry is an imitation of Wordsworth's.'

'Did Wordsworth repeat any other poetry than his own?'

'Never in a single instance, to my knowledge. He is remarkable for the manner in which he is wrapped up in his own poetical life. Everything ministers to it. Everything is done with reference to it. He is all and only a poet.'

'What is Southey's manner of life?'

'Walter Scott said of him that he lived too much with women. He is secluded in the country, and surrounded by a circle of admiring friends, who glorify every literary project he undertakes, and persuade him, in spite of his natural modesty, that he can do nothing wrong. He has great genius, and is a most estimable man.'

On the same day that he breakfasted with Wilson, this fortunate tourist dined with Jeffrey, with whom Lord Brougham was staying. Unluckily, Brougham was absent, at a public dinner given to Lord Grey, who also

happened to be in Edinburgh at the time. Willis was charmed with Jeffrey, with his frank smile, hearty manner, and graceful style of putting a guest at his ease. But he cared less for the political conversation at table. 'It had been my lot,' he says, 'to be thrown principally among Tories (*Conservatives* is the new name) since my arrival in England, and it was difficult to rid myself at once of the impressions of a fortnight passed in the castle of a Tory earl. My sympathies on the great and glorious occasion [the Whig dinner to Lord Grey] were slower than those of the rest of the company, and much of their enthusiasm seemed to me overstrained. Altogether, I entered less into the spirit of the hour than I could have wished. Politics are seldom witty or amusing; and though I was charmed with the good sense and occasional eloquence of Lord Jeffrey, I was glad to get upstairs to *chasse-café* and the ladies.'

Willis aggravated a temporary lameness by dancing at the ball that followed the Whig banquet, and was compelled to abandon a charming land-route north that he had mapped out, and allow himself to be taken 'this side up' on a steamer to Aberdeen. Here he took coach for Fochabers, and thence posted to Gordon Castle. At the castle he found himself in the midst of a most distinguished company; the page who showed him to his room running over the names of Lord Aberdeen and Lord Claude Hamilton, the Duchess of Richmond and her daughter, Lady Sophia Lennox, Lord and Lady Stormont, Lord and Lady Mandeville, Lord and Lady Morton, Lord Aboyne, Lady Keith, and twenty other lesser lights. The duke himself came to fetch his guest before dinner, and presented him to the duchess

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and the rest of the party. In a letter to Lady Blessington Willis says: 'I am delighted with the duke and duchess. He is a delightful, hearty old fellow, full of fun and conversation, and she is an uncommonly fine woman, and, without beauty, has something agreeable in her countenance. *Pour moi-même*, I get on better everywhere than in your presence. I only fear I talk too much; but all the world is particularly civil to me, and among a score of people, no one of whom I had ever seen yesterday, I find myself quite at home to-day.'

The ten days at Gordon Castle Willis afterwards set apart in his memory as 'a bright ellipse in the usual procession of joys and sorrows.' He certainly made the most of this unique opportunity of observing the manners and customs of the great. The routine of life at the castle was what each guest chose to make it. 'Between breakfast and lunch,' he writes, 'the ladies were usually invisible, and the gentlemen rode, or shot, or played billiards. At two o'clock a dish or two of hot game and a profusion of cold meats were set on small tables, and everybody came in for a kind of lounging half meal, which occupied perhaps an hour. Thence all adjourned to the drawing-room, under the windows of which were drawn up carriages of all descriptions, with grooms, outriders, footmen, and saddle-horses for gentlemen and ladies. Parties were then made up for driving or riding, and from a pony-chaise to a phaeton and four, there was no class of vehicle that was not at your disposal. In ten minutes the carriages were all filled, and away they flew, some to the banks of the Spey or the seaside, some to the drives in the park, and all with the delightful consciousness that speed where you would, the horizon scarce limited the possessions of your host, and you were

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everywhere at home. The ornamental gates flying open at your approach; the herds of red deer trooping away from the sound of your wheels; the stately pheasants feeding tamely in the immense preserves; the stalking gamekeepers lifting their hats in the dark recesses of the forest—there was something in this perpetual reminder of your privileges which, as a novelty, was far from disagreeable. I could not, at the time, bring myself to feel, what perhaps would be more poetical and republican, that a ride in the wild and unfenced forest of my own country would have been more to my taste.’

Willis came to the conclusion that a North American Indian, in his more dignified phase, closely resembled an English nobleman in manner, since it was impossible to astonish either. All violent sensations, he observes, are avoided in high life. ‘In conversation nothing is so “odd” (a word that in English means everything disagreeable) as emphasis, or a startling epithet, or gesture, and in common intercourse nothing is so vulgar as any approach to “a scene.” For all extraordinary admiration, the word “capital” suffices; for all ordinary praise, the word “nice”; for all condemnation in morals, manners, or religion, the word “odd.” . . . What is called an overpowering person is immediately shunned, for he talks too much, and excites too much attention. In any other country he would be considered amusing. He is regarded here as a monopoliser of the general interest, and his laurels, talk he never so well, overshadow the rest of the company.’

On leaving Gordon Castle, Willis crossed Scotland by the Caledonian Canal, and from Fort William jolted in a Highland cart through Glencoe to Tarbet on Lomond. Thence the regulation visits were paid to Loch Katrine,

the Trossachs and Callander. Another stay at Dalhousie Castle gave the tourist an opportunity of seeing Abbotsford, where he heard much talk of Sir Walter Scott. Lord Dalhousie had many anecdotes to tell of Scott's school-days, and Willis recalled some reminiscences of the Wizard that he had heard from Moore in London. 'Scott was the soul of honesty,' Moore had said. 'When I was on a visit to him, we were coming up from Kelso at sunset, and as there was to be a fine moon, I quoted to him his own rule for seeing "fair Melrose aright," and proposed to stay an hour and enjoy it. "Bah," said Scott. "I never saw it by moonlight." We went, however, and Scott, who seemed to be on the most familiar terms with the cicerone, pointed to an empty niche, and said to him: "I think I have a Virgin and Child that will just do for your niche. I'll send it to you." "How happy you have made that man," I said. "Oh," said Scott, "it was always in the way, and Madam Scott is constantly grudging it house-room. We're well rid of it." Any other man would have allowed himself at least the credit of a kind action.'

After a stay at a Lancashire country-house, Willis arrived at Liverpool, where he got his first sight of the newly-opened railway to Manchester. In the letters and journals of the period, it is rather unusual to come upon any allusion to the great revolution in land-travelling. We often read of our grandfathers' astonishment at the steam-packets that crossed the Atlantic in a fortnight, but they seem to have slid into the habit of travelling by rail almost as a matter of course, much as their descendants have taken to touring in motor-cars. Willis the observant, however, has left on record his sensations during his first journey by rail.



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‘Down we dived into the long tunnel,’ he relates, ‘emerging from the darkness at a pace that made my hair sensibly tighten, and hold on with apprehension. Thirty miles in the hour is pleasant going when one is a little accustomed to it, it gives one such a pleasant contempt for time and distance. The whizzing past of the return trains, going in the opposite direction with the same degree of velocity—making you recoil in one second, and a mile off the next—was the only thing which, after a few minutes, I did not take to very kindly.’

Willis adds to our obligations by reporting the cries of the newsboys at the Elephant and Castle, where all the coaches to and from the South stopped for twenty minutes. On the occasion that our traveller passed through, the boys were crying ‘Noospipper, sir! Buy the morning pippers, sir! *Times*, *Herald*, *Chrinnicle*, and *Munning Post*, sir—contains Lud Brum’s entire innihilation of Lud Nummanby—Ledy Flor ‘Estings’ murder by Lud Melbun and the Maids of Honour—debate on the Croolty-Hannimals Bill, and a fatil cats-trophy in conskens of loosfer matches! Sixpence, only sixpence!’

In November Willis returned to London, and took lodgings in Vigo Street. During the next ten months he seems to have done a good deal of work for the magazines, and to have been made much of in society as a literary celebrity. His stories and articles, which appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* under the pseudonym of Philip Slingsby, were eagerly read by the public of that day. He was presented at court, admitted to the Athenæum and Travellers’ Clubs, and patronised by Lady Charlotte Bury and Lady Stepney, ladies who were in the habit of writing bad novels, and giving excellent

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dinners. Madden, Lady Blessington's biographer, who saw a good deal of Willis at this time, says that he was an extremely agreeable young man, somewhat overdressed, and a little too *démonstratif*, but abounding in good spirits. 'He was observant and communicative, lively and clever in conversation, having the peculiar art of making himself agreeable to ladies, old and young, *dégagé* in his manner, and on exceedingly good terms with himself.'

Not only had Willis the *entrée* into fashionable Bohemia, but he was well received in many families of unquestionable respectability. Elderly and middle-aged ladies were especially attracted by his flattering attentions and deferential manners, and at this time two of his most devoted friends were Mrs. Shaw of the Manor House, Lee, a daughter of Lord Erskine, and Mrs. Skinner of Shirley Park, the wife of an Indian nabob. Their houses were always open to him, and he says in a letter to his mother: 'I have two homes in England where I am loved like a child. I had a letter from Mrs. Shaw, who thought I looked low-spirited at the opera the other night. "Young men have but two causes of unhappiness," she writes, "love and money. If it is *money*, Mr. Shaw wishes me to say you shall have as much as you want; if it is *love*, tell us the lady, and perhaps we can help you." I spend my Sundays alternately at their splendid country-house, and at Mrs. Skinner's, and they can never get enough of me. I am often asked if I carry a love-philter with me.'

At Shirley Park, Willis struck up a friendship with Jane Porter, and made the acquaintance of Lady Morgan, Praed, John Leech, and Martin Tupper. Mrs.

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Skinner professed to be extremely anxious to find him a suitable wife, and in a confidential letter to her, he writes: 'You say if you had a daughter you would give her to me. If you *had* one, I should certainly take you at your word, provided this *exposé* of my poverty did not change your fancy. I should like to marry in England, and I feel every day that my best years and best affections are running to waste. I am proud to be an American, but as a literary man, I would rather *live* in England. So if you know of any affectionate and *good* girl who would be content to live a quiet life, and could love your humble servant, you have full power to dispose of me, *provided* she has five hundred a year, or as much more as she likes. I know enough of the world to cut my throat, rather than bring a delicate woman down to a dependence on my brains for support.'

In March of this year, 1835, Willis produced his *Melanie, and other Poems*, which was 'edited' by Barry Cornwall. He received the honour of a parody in the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, entitled 'The Fight with the Snapping Turtle, or the American St. George.' In this ballad Willis and Bryant are represented as setting out to kill the Snapping Turtle, spurred on by the offer of a hundred dollars reward. The turtle swallows Willis, but is thereupon taken ill, and having returned him to earth again, dies in great agony. When he claims the reward, he is informed that

'Since you dragged the tarnal crittur  
From the bottom of the ponds,  
Here's the hundred dollars due you  
*All in Pennsylvanian bonds.*'

At the end of the poem is a drawing of a pair of stocks, labelled 'The only good American securities.'

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Willis seems to have been too busy to Boswellise this season, but we get a glimpse of him in his letters to Miss Mitford, and one or two of the notes in his diary are worth quoting. On April 22 he writes to the author of *Our Village* in his usual flattering style: 'I am anxious to see your play and your next book, and I quite agree with you that the drama is your *piéd*, though I think laurels, and spreading ones, are sown for you in every department of writing. Nobody ever wrote better prose, and what could not the author of *Rienzi* do in verse. For myself, I am far from considering myself regularly embarked in literature, and if I can live without it, or ply any other vocation, shall vote it a thankless trade, and save my "entusymussy" for my wife and children—when I get them. I am at present steeped to the lips in London society, going to everything, from Devonshire House to a publisher's dinner in Paternoster Row, and it is not a bad *olla podrida* of life and manners. I dote on "England and true English," and was never so happy, or so at a loss to find a minute for care or forethought.'

In his diary for June 30, Willis notes: 'Breakfasted with Samuel Rogers. Talked of Mrs. Butler's book, and Rogers gave us suppressed passages. Talked critics, and said that as long as you cast a shadow, you were sure that you possessed substance. Coleridge said of Southey, "I never think of him but as mending a pen." Southey said of Coleridge, "Whenever anything presents itself to him in the form of a duty, that moment he finds himself incapable of looking at it."' On July 9 we have the entry: 'Dined with Dr. Beattie, and met Thomas Campbell. . . . He spoke of Scott's slavishness to men of rank, but said it did not interfere with his

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genius. Said it sunk a man's heart to think that he and Byron were dead, and there was nobody left to praise or approve. . . . He told a story of dining with Burns and a Bozzy friend, who, when Campbell proposed the health of *Mr.* Burns, said, "Sir, you will always be known as *Mr.* Campbell, but posterity will talk of *Burns*." He was playful and amusing, and drank gin and water.'

While staying with the Skinners in August, Willis met his fate in the person of Miss Mary Stace, daughter of a General Stace. After a week's acquaintance he proposed to her, and was accepted. She was, we are told, a beauty of the purest Saxon type, with a bright complexion, blue eyes, light-brown hair, and delicate, regular features. Her disposition was clinging and affectionate, and she had enjoyed the religious bringing up that her lover thought of supreme importance to a woman. General Stace agreed to allow his daughter £300 a year, which with the £400 that Willis made by his pen, was considered a sufficient income for the young couple to start housekeeping upon.

Willis, who had promised to pay Miss Mitford a visit in the autumn, writes to her on September 22, to explain that all his plans were altered. 'Just before starting with Miss Jane Porter on a tour that was to include Reading,' he says, 'I went to a picnic, fell in love with a blue-eyed girl, and (after running the gauntlet successfully through France, Italy, Greece, Germany, Asia Minor, and Turkey) I renewed my youth, and became "a suitor for love." I am to be married (*sequitur*) on Thursday week. . . . The lady who is to take me, as the Irish say, "in a present,"

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is some six years younger than myself, gentle, religious, relying, and unambitious. She has never been whirled through the gay society of London, so is not giddy or vain. She has never swum in a gondola, or written a sonnet, so has a proper respect for those who have. She is called pretty, but is more than that in *my* eyes; sings as if her heart were hid in her lips, and *loves* me. . . . We are bound to Paris for a month (because I think amusement better than reflection when a woman makes a doubtful bargain), and by November we return to London for the winter, and in the spring sail for America to see my mother. I have promised to live mainly on this side of the water, and shall return in the course of a year to try what contentment may be sown and reaped in a green lane in Kent.'

While the happy pair were on their honeymoon, Lady Blessington had undertaken to see the *Pencillings by the Way* through the press. For the first edition Willis received £250, but he made, from first to last, about a thousand pounds by the book. Its appearance in volume form had been anticipated by Lockhart's scathing review in the *Quarterly* for September 1835. The critic, annoyed at Willis's strictures on himself in the interview with Professor Wilson, attacked the *Pencillings*, as they had appeared in the *New York Mirror*, with all proper names printed in full, and many personal details that were left out in the English edition. Lockhart always knew how to stab a man in the tenderest place, and he stabbed Willis in his gentility. After pointing out that while visiting in London and the provinces as a young American sonneteer of the most ultra-sentimental delicacy, the Penciller was all the time the regular paid correspon-

dent of a New York Journal, he observes that the letters derive their powers of entertainment chiefly from the light that they reflect upon the manners and customs of the author's own countrymen, since, from his sketches of English interiors, the reader may learn what American breakfast, dinners, and table-talk are *not*; or at all events what they were not in those circles of American society with which the writer happened to be familiar.

‘Many of *this person's* discoveries,’ continues Lockhart, warming to his work, ‘will be received with ridicule in his own country, where the doors of the best houses were probably not opened to him as liberally as those of the English nobility. In short, we are apt to consider him as a just representative—not of the American mind and manners generally—but only of the young men of fair education among the busy, middling orders of mercantile cities. In his letters from Gordon Castle there are bits of solid, full-grown impudence and impertinence; while over not a few of the paragraphs is a varnish of conceited vulgarity which is too ludicrous to be seriously offensive. . . . We can well believe that Mr. Willis depicted the sort of society that most interests his countrymen, “born to be slaves and struggling to be lords,” their servile adulation of rank and talent; their stupid admiration of processions and levees, are leading features of all the American books of travel. . . . We much doubt if all the pretty things we have quoted will so far propitiate Lady Blessington as to make her again admit to her table the animal who has printed what ensues. [Here follows the report of Moore’s conversation on the subject of O’Connell.] As far as we are acquainted with

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English or American literature, this is the first example of a man creeping into your home, and forthwith, before your claret is dry on his lips, printing *table-talk on delicate subjects, and capable of compromising individuals.*'

The *Quarterly* having thus given the lead, the rest of the Tory magazines gaily followed suit. Maginn flourished his shillelagh, and belaboured his victim with a brutality that has hardly ever been equalled, even by the pioneer journals of the Wild West. 'This is a goose of a book,' he begins, 'or if anybody wishes the idiom changed, the book of a goose. There is not an idea in it beyond what might germinate in the brain of a washerwoman.' He then proceeds to call the author by such elegant names as 'lickspittle,' 'beggarly skittler,' jackass, ninny, haberdasher, 'fifty-fifth rate scribbler of gripe-visited sonnets,' and 'namby-pamby writer in twaddling albums kept by the mustachioed widows or bony matrons of Portland Place.'

The people whose hospitality Willis was accused of violating wrote to assure him of the pleasure his book had given them. Lord Dalhousie writes: 'We all agree in one sentiment, that a more amusing and delightful production was never issued by the press. The Duke and Duchess of Gordon were here lately, and expressed themselves in similar terms.' Lady Blessington did not withdraw her friendship, but Willis admits, in one of his letters, that he had no deeper regret than that his indiscretion should have checked the freedom of his approach to her. As a result of the slashing reviews, the book sold with the readiness of a *succès de scandale*, though it had been so rigorously



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edited for the English market, that very few indiscretions were left.

The unexpurgated version of the *Pencillings* was, however, copied into the English papers and eagerly read by the persons most concerned, such as Fonblanque, who bitterly complained of the libel upon his personal appearance, O'Connell, who broke off his lifelong friendship with Moore, and Captain Marryat, who was furious at the remark that his 'gross trash' sold immensely in Wapping. Like Lockhart, he revenged himself by an article in his own magazine, the *Metropolitan*, in which he denounced Willis as a 'spurious attaché,' and made dark insinuations against his birth and parentage. This attack was too personal to be ignored. Willis demanded an apology, to which Marryat replied with a challenge, and after a long correspondence, most of which found its way into the *Times*, a duel was fixed to take place at Chatham. At the last moment the seconds managed to arrange matters between their principals, and the affair ended without bloodshed. This was fortunate for Willis, who was little used to fire-arms, whilst Marryat was a crack shot.

In his preface to the first edition of the *Pencillings* Willis explains that the ephemeral nature and usual obscurity of periodical correspondence gave a sufficient warrant to his mind that his descriptions would die where they first saw the light, and that therefore he had indulged himself in a freedom of detail and topic only customary in posthumous memoirs. He expresses his astonishment that this particular sin should have been visited upon him at a distance of three thousand miles, when the *Quarterly* reviewer's own fame rested on the more

aggravated instance of a book of personalities published under the very noses of the persons described (*Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*). After observing that he was little disposed to find fault, since everything in England pleased him, he proceeds: 'In one single instance I indulged myself in strictures upon individual character. . . . I but repeated what I had said a thousand times, and never without an indignant echo to its truth, that the editor of that Review was the most unprincipled critic of the age. Aside from its flagrant literary injustice, we owe to the *Quarterly* every spark of ill-feeling that has been kept alive between England and America for the last twenty years. The sneers, the opprobrious epithets of this bravo of literature have been received in a country where the machinery of reviewing was not understood, as the voice of the English people, and animosity for which there was no other reason has been thus periodically fed and exasperated. I conceive it to be my duty as a literary man—I *know* it is my duty as an American—to lose no opportunity of setting my heel on this reptile of criticism. He has turned and stung me. Thank God, I have escaped the slime of his approbation.'

The winter was spent in London, and in the following March Willis brought out his *Inklings of Adventure*, a reprint of the stories that had appeared in various magazines over the signature of Philip Slingsby. These were supposed to be real adventures under a thin disguise of fiction, and the public eagerly read the tawdry little tales in the hope of discovering the identities of the *dramatis personæ*. The majority of the 'Inklings' deal with the romantic adventures of a young literary man who wins the affection of high-born

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ladies, and is made much of in aristocratic circles. The author revels in descriptions of luxurious boudoirs in which recline voluptuous blondes or exquisite brunettes, with hearts always at the disposal of the all-conquering Philip Slingsby. Fashionable fiction, however, was unable to support the expense of a fashionable establishment, and in May 1836 the couple sailed for America. Willis hoped to obtain a diplomatic appointment, and return to Europe for good, but all his efforts were vain, and he was obliged to rely on his pen for a livelihood. His first undertaking was the letterpress for an illustrated volume on American scenery; and for some months he travelled about the country with the artist who was responsible for the illustrations. On one of his journeys he fell in love with a pretty spot on the banks of the Owego Creek, near the junction with the Susquehanna, and bought a couple of hundred acres and a house, which he named Glenmary after his wife.

Here the pair settled down happily for some five years, and here Willis wrote his pleasant, gossiping *Letters from Under a Bridge* for the *New York Mirror*. In these he prattled of his garden, his farm, his horses and dogs, and the strangers within his gates. Unfortunately, he was unable to devote much attention to his farm, which was said to grow nothing but flowers of speed, but was forced to spend more and more time in the editorial office, and to write hastily and incessantly for a livelihood. In 1839, owing to a temporary coolness with the proprietor of the *Mirror*, Willis accepted the proposal of his friend, Dr. Porter, that he should start a new weekly paper called the *Corsair*, one

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of a whole crop of pirate weeklies that started up with the establishment of the first service of Atlantic liners. In May 1839 the first steam-vessel that had crossed the ocean anchored in New York Harbour, and thenceforward it was possible to obtain supplies from the European literary markets within a fortnight of publication. It was arranged between Dr. Parker and Willis that the cream of the contemporary literature of England, France, and Germany should be conveyed to the readers of the *Corsair*, and of course there was no question of payment to the authors whose wares were thus appropriated.

The first number of the *Corsair* appeared in January 1839, but apparently piracy was not always a lucrative trade, for the paper had an existence of little more than a year. In the course of its brief career, however, Willis paid a flying visit to England, where he accomplished a great deal of literary business. He had written a play called *The Usurer Matched*, which was brought out by Wallack at the Surrey Theatre, and is said to have been played to crowded houses during a fairly long run, but neither this nor any of his other plays brought the author fame or fortune. During this season he published his *Loiterings of Travel*, a collection of stories and sketches, a fourth edition of the *Pencilings*, an English edition of *Letters from Under a Bridge*, and arranged with Virtue for works on Irish and Canadian scenery. In addition to all this, he was contributing jottings in London to the *Corsair*. As might be supposed, he had not much time for society, but he met a few old friends, made acquaintance with Kemble and Kean, went to a ball at Almack's, and was present at the famous Eglinton Tournament,

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which watery catastrophe he described for his paper. One of the most interesting of his new acquaintances was Thackeray, then chiefly renowned as a writer for the magazines. On July 26 Willis writes to Dr. Porter :—

‘I have engaged a new contributor to the *Corsair*. Who do you think? The author of *Yellowplush* and *Major Gahagan*. He has gone to Paris, and will write letters from there, and afterwards from London for a guinea a *close* column of the *Corsair*—cheaper than I ever did anything in my life. For myself, I think him the very best periodical writer alive. He is a royal, daring, fine creature too.’ In his published *Jottings*, Willis told his readers that ‘Mr. Thackeray, the author, breakfasted with me yesterday, and the *Corsair* will be delighted to hear that I have engaged this cleverest and most gifted of all the magazine-writers of London to become a *regular correspondent of the Corsair*. . . . Thackeray is a tall, athletic-looking man of about forty-five [he was actually only eight-and-twenty], with a look of talent that could never be mistaken. He is one of the most accomplished draughtsmen in England, as well as the most brilliant of periodical writers.’ Thackeray only wrote eight letters for the *Corsair*, which were afterwards republished in his *Paris Sketch-book*. There is an allusion to this episode in *The Adventures of Philip*, the hero being invited to contribute to a New York journal called *The Upper Ten Thousand*, a phrase invented by Willis.

When the *Corsair* came to an untimely end, Willis had no difficulty in finding employment on other papers. He is said to have been the first American magazine-writer who was tolerably well paid, and at one

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time he was making about a thousand a year by periodical work. That his name was already celebrated among his own countrymen seems to be proved by the story of a commercial gentleman at a Boston tea-party who 'guessed that Gō-ēthē was the N. P. Willis of Germany.' The tales written about this time were afterwards collected into a volume called *Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil*. Thackeray made great fun of this work in the *Edinburgh Review* for October 1845, more especially of that portion called 'The Heart-book of Ernest Clay.' 'Like Cæsar,' observed Thackeray, 'Ernest Clay is always writing of his own victories. Duchesses pine for him, modest virgins go into consumption and die for him, old grandmothers of sixty forget their families and their propriety, and fall on the neck of this "Free Pencil."' He quotes with delight the description of a certain Lady Mildred, one of Ernest Clay's numerous loves, who glides into the room at a London tea-party, 'with a step as elastic as the nod of a water-lily. A snowy turban, from which hung on either temple a cluster of crimson camellias still wet with the night-dew; long raven curls of undisturbed grace falling on shoulders of that indescribable and dewy coolness which follows a morning bath.' How naïvely, comments the critic, does this nobleman of nature recommend the use of this rare cosmetic!

In spite of his popularity, Willis's affairs were not prospering at this time. He had received nothing from the estate of his father-in-law, who died in 1839, his publisher failed in 1842, and he was obliged to sell Glenmary and remove to New York, whence he had undertaken to send a fortnightly letter to a paper

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at Washington. This was the year of Dickens's visit to America, and Willis was present at the 'Boz Ball,' where he danced with Mrs. Dickens, to whom he afterwards did the honours of Broadway. In 1843 Willis made up his difference with Morris, and again became joint-editor of the *Mirror*, which, a year later, was changed from a weekly to a daily paper. His contributions to the journal consisted of stories, poems, letters, book-notices, answers to correspondents, and editorial gossip of all kinds.

In March 1845 Mrs. Willis died in her confinement, leaving her (temporarily) broken-hearted husband with one little girl. 'An angel without fault or foible' was his epitaph upon the woman to whom, in spite of his many fictitious *bonnes fortunes*, he is said to have been faithfully attached. But Willis was not born to live alone, and in the following summer he fell in love with a Miss Cornelia Grinnell at Washington, and was married to her in October, 1846. The second Mrs. Willis was nearly twenty years younger than her husband, but she was a sensible, energetic young woman, who made him an excellent wife.

The title of the *Mirror* had been changed to that of *The Home Journal*, and under its new name it became a prosperous paper. Willis, who was the leading spirit of the enterprise, set himself to portray the town, chronicling plays, dances, picture-exhibitions, sights and entertainments of all kinds in the airy manner that was so keenly appreciated by his countrymen. He was recognised as an authority on fashion, and his correspondence columns were crowded with appeals for guidance in questions of dress and etiquette. He was also a favourite in general society, though he is said to have

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been, next to Fenimore Cooper, the best-abused man of letters in America. One of his most pleasing characteristics was his ready appreciation and encouragement of young writers, for he was totally free from professional jealousy. He was the literary sponsor of Aldrich, Bayard Taylor, and Lowell, among others, and the last-named alludes to Willis in his *Fable for Critics* (1848) in the following flattering lines :—

‘His nature’s a glass of champagne with the foam on’t,  
As tender as Fletcher, as witty as Beaumont ;  
So his best things are done in the heat of the moment.

. . . . .  
He’d have been just the fellow to sup at the ‘Mermaid,’  
Cracking jokes at rare Ben, with an eye to the barmaid,  
His wit running up as Canary ran down,—  
The topmost bright bubble on the wave of the town.’

After 1846 Willis wrote little except gossiping paragraphs and other ephemera. In answer to remonstrances against this method of frittering away his talents, he was accustomed to reply that the public liked trifles, and that he was bound to go on ‘buttering curiosity with the ooze of his brains.’ He read but little in later life, nor associated with men of high intellect or serious aims, but showed an ever-increasing preference for the frivolous and the feminine. In 1850 he published another volume of little magazine stories called *People I have Met*. This appeared in London as well as in New York, and Thackeray again revenged himself for that close column which had been rewarded by an uncertain guinea, by holding up his former editor to ridicule. With mischievous delight he describes the amusement that is to be found in N. P. Willis’s



society, ‘amusement at the immensity of N. P.’s blunders; amusement at the prodigiousness of his self-esteem; amusement always with or at Willis the poet, Willis the man, Willis the dandy, Willis the lover—now the Broadway Crichton—once the ruler of fashion and heart-enslaver of Bond Street, and the Boulevard, and the Corso, and the Chiaja, and the Constantinople Bazaars. It is well for the general peace of families that the world does not produce many such men; there would be no keeping our wives and daughters in their senses were such fascinators to make frequent apparitions among us; but it is comfortable that there should have been a Willis; and as a literary man myself, and anxious for the honour of that profession, I am proud to think that a man of our calling should have come, should have seen, should have conquered as Willis has done. . . . There is more or less of truth, he nobly says, in these stories—more or less truth, to be sure there is—and it is on account of this more or less truth that I for my part love and applaud this hero and poet. We live in our own country, and don’t know it; Willis walks into it, and dominates it at once. To know a duchess, for instance, is given to very few of us. He sees things that are not given to us to see. We see the duchess in her carriage, and gaze with much reverence on the strawberry-leaves on the panels, and her grace within; whereas the odds are that that lovely duchess has had, one time or the other, a desperate flirtation with Willis the Conqueror. Perhaps she is thinking of him at this very moment, as her jewelled hand presses her perfumed handkerchief to her fair and coroneted brow, and she languidly stops to purchase a ruby bracelet at Gunter’s, or to sip an ice at Howell and

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James's. He must have whole mattresses stuffed with the blonde or raven or auburn tresses of England's fairest daughters. When the female English aristocracy read the title of *People I have Met*, I can fancy the whole female peerage of Willis's time in a shudder; and the melancholy marchioness, and the abandoned countess, and the heart-stricken baroness trembling as each gets the volume, and asks of her guilty conscience, "Gracious goodness, is the monster going to show up me?"

In 1853 Willis, who had been obliged to travel for the benefit of his declining health, took a fancy to the neighbourhood of the Hudson, and bought fifty acres of waste land, upon which he built himself a house, and called the place Idlewild. Here he settled down once more to a quiet country life, took care of his health, cultivated his garden, and wrote long weekly letters to the *Home Journal*. He had by this time five children, middle age had stolen upon him, and now that he could no longer pose as his own all-conquering hero, his hand seems to have lost its cunning. His editorial articles, afterwards published under the appropriate title of *Ephemera*, grew thinner and flatter with the passing of the years; yet slight and superficial as the best of them are, they were the result of very hard writing. His manuscripts were a mass of erasures and interlineations, but his copy was so neatly prepared that even the erasures had a sort of 'wavy elegance' which the compositors actually preferred to print. His mannerisms and affectations grew upon him in his later years, and he became more and more addicted to the coining of new words and phrases, only a few of which proved effective. Besides the now well-worn term,

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the 'upper ten thousand,' he is credited with the invention of 'Japonicadom,' 'come-at-able,' and 'stay-at-home-ativeness.' One or two of his sayings may be worth quoting, such as his request for Washington Irving's blotting-book, because it was the door-mat on which the thoughts of his last book had wiped their sandals before they went in; and his remark that to ask a literary man to write a letter after his day's work was like asking a penny-postman to take a walk in the evening for the pleasure of it.

On the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Willis went to Washington as war-correspondent of his paper. It does not appear that he saw any harder service than the dinners and receptions of the capitol, since an opportune fit of illness prevented his following the army to Bull's Run. The correspondent who took his place on the march had his career cut short by a Southern bullet. Willis, meanwhile, was driving about with Mrs. Lincoln, with whom he became a favourite, although she reproached him for his want of tact in speaking of her 'motherly expression' in one of his published letters, she being at that time only thirty-six. He met Hawthorne at Washington, and describes him as very shy and reserved in manner, but adds, 'I found he was a lover of mine, and we enjoyed our acquaintance very much.' One of the minor results of the great Civil War was the extinguishing of Willis's literary reputation; his frothy trifling suddenly became obsolete when men had sterner things to think about than the cut of a coat, or the etiquette of a morning call. The nation began to demand realities, even in its fiction, the circulation of the *Home Journal* fell off, and Willis, who had always affected a horror of figures and business

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matters generally, found himself in financial difficulties. He was obliged to let Idlewild, and return, in spite of his rapidly failing health, to the editorial office at New York.

The last few years of Willis's career afford a melancholy contrast to its brilliant opening. Health, success, prosperity—all had deserted him, and nothing remained but the editorial chair, to which he clung even after epileptic attacks had resulted in paralysis and gradual softening of the brain. The failure of his mental powers was kept secret as long as possible, but in November, 1866, he yielded to the entreaties of his wife and children, knocked off work for ever, and went home to die. His last few months were passed in helpless weakness, and he only occasionally recognised those around him. The end came on January 20, 1867, his sixty-first birthday.

Selections from Willis's prose works have been published within recent years in America, and a new edition of his poems has appeared in England, while a carefully written Life by Mr. De Beers is included in the series of 'American Men of Letters.' But in this country at least his fame, such as it is, will rest upon his sketches of such celebrities as Lamb, Moore, Bulwer, D'Orsay, and D'Israeli. As long as we retain any interest in them and their works, we shall like to know how they looked and dressed, and what they talked about in private life. It is impossible altogether to approve of the Penciller—his absurdities were too marked, and his indiscretions too many—yet it is probable that few who have followed his meteor-like career will be able to refrain from echoing Thackeray's dictum: 'It is comfortable that there should have been a Willis!'



**LADY HESTER STANHOPE**









*Art Repro Co*

*Lady Hester Stanhope.*  
*From*  
*a drawing by R. J. Hamerton*





# LADY HESTER STANHOPE

## PART I

THERE are few true stories that are distinguished by a well-marked moral. If we study human chronicles we generally find the ungodly flourishing permanently like a green bay-tree, and the righteous apparently forsaken and begging his bread. But it occasionally happens that a human life illustrates some moral lesson with the triteness and crudity of a Sunday-school book, and of such is the career of Lady Hester Stanhope, a Pitt on the mother's side, and more of a Pitt in temper and disposition than her grandfather, the great Commoner himself. Her story contains the useful but conventional lesson that pride goeth before a fall, and that all earthly glory is but vanity, together with a warning against the ambition that o'erleaps itself, and ends in failure and humiliation. That humanity will profit by such a lesson, whether true or invented for didactic purposes, is doubtful, but at least Nature has done her best for once to usurp the seat of the preacher, 'to point a moral and adorn a tale.'

Lady Hester, who was born on March 12, 1776, was the eldest daughter of Charles, third Earl of Stanhope, by his first wife Hester, daughter of the great Lord Chatham. Lord Stanhope seems to have been an uncomfortable person, who combined scientific research with democratic principles, and contrived to quarrel with most of

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his family. In order to live up to his theories he laid down his carriage and horses, effaced the armorial bearings from his plate, and removed from his walls some famous tapestry, because it was 'so d——d aristocratical.' If one of his daughters happened to look better than usual in a becoming hat or frock, he had the garment laid away, and something coarse put in its place. The children were left almost entirely to the care of governesses and tutors, their step-mother, the second Lady Stanhope (a Grenville by birth) being a fashionable fine lady, who devoted her whole time to her social duties, while Lord Stanhope was absorbed by his scientific pursuits. The home was not a happy one, either for the three girls of the first marriage, or for the three sons of the second. In 1796 Rachel, the youngest daughter, eloped with a Sevenoaks apothecary named Taylor, and was cast off by her family; and in 1800 Griselda, the second daughter, married a Mr. Tekell, of Hampshire. In this year Hester left her home, which George III. used to call Democracy Hall, and went to live with her grandmother, the Dowager Lady Stanhope.

On the death of Lady Stanhope in 1803, Lady Hester was offered a home by her uncle, William Pitt, with whom she remained until his death in 1806. Pitt became deeply attached to his handsome, high-spirited niece. He believed in her sincerity and affection for himself, admired her courage and cleverness, laughed at her temper, and encouraged her pride. She seems to have gained a considerable influence over her uncle, and contrived to have a finger in most of the ministerial pies. When reproached for allowing her such unreserved liberty of action in state affairs, Pitt was accustomed to

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reply, 'I let her do as she pleases; for if she were resolved to cheat the devil himself, she would do it.' 'And so I would,' Lady Hester used to add, when she told the story. If we may believe her own account, Pitt told her that she was fit to sit between Augustus and Mæcenæ, and assured her that 'I have plenty of good diplomatists, but they are none of them military men; and I have plenty of good officers, but not one of them is worth sixpence in the cabinet. If you were a man, Hester, I would send you on the Continent with 60,000 men, and give you *carte blanche*, and I am sure that not one of my plans would fail, and not one soldier would go with his boots unblacked.' This admiration, according to the same authority, was shared by George III., who one day on the Terrace at Windsor informed Mr. Pitt that he had got a new and superior minister in his room, and one, moreover, who was a good general. 'There is my new minister,' he added, pointing at Lady Hester. 'There is not a man in my kingdom who is a better politician, and there is not a woman who better adorns her sex. And let me say, Mr. Pitt, you have not reason to be proud you are a minister, for there have been many before you, and will be many after you; but you have reason to be proud of her, who unites everything that is great in man and woman.'

All this must, of course, be taken with grains of salt, but it is certain that Lady Hester occupied a position of almost unparalleled supremacy for a woman, that she dispensed patronage, lectured ministers, and snubbed princes. On one occasion Lord Mulgrave, who had just been appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, found a broken egg-spoon on the breakfast-table at Walmer, and asked, 'How can Mr. Pitt have such a

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spoon as this?' 'Don't you know,' retorted Lady Hester, 'that Mr. Pitt sometimes uses very slight and weak instruments wherewith to effect his ends?' Again, when Mr. Addington wished to take the title of Lord Raleigh, Lady Hester determined to prevent what she regarded as a desecration of a great name. She professed to have seen a caricature, which she minutely described, representing Mr. Addington as Sir Walter Raleigh, and the King as Queen Elizabeth. Mr. Pitt, believing the story, repeated it to Addington and others, with the result that messengers were despatched to all the print-shops to buy up the whole impression. Of course no such caricature was to be found, but the prospective peer had received a fright, and chose the inoffensive title of Lord Sidmouth. Lady Hester despised Lord Liverpool for a well-meaning blunderer, but she hated and distrusted Canning, whom she was accustomed to describe as a fiery, red-headed Irish politician, who was never staunch to any person or any party; and she declared that by her scoldings she had often made him blubber like a schoolboy. It cannot be supposed that her ladyship was popular with the numerous persons, high and low, who came under the ban of her displeasure, or suffered from her pride; but she was young, handsome, and witty, her position was unassailable, and as long as her uncle chose to laugh at her insolence and her eccentricities, no lesser power presumed to frown.

For her beauty in youth we must again take her own account on trust, since she never consented to sit for her portrait, and in old age her recollection of her vanished charms may have been coloured by some pardonable exaggeration. 'At twenty,' she told a chronicler, 'my complexion was like alabaster, and at five paces distant

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the sharpest eyes could not discover my pearl necklace from my skin. My lips were of such a beautiful carnation that, without vanity, I can assure you, very few women had the like. A dark-blue shade under the eyes, and the blue veins that were observable through the transparent skin, heightened the brilliancy of my features. Nor were the roses wanting in my cheeks; and to all this was added a permanency in my looks that no sort of fatigue could impair.' She was fond of relating an anecdote of a flattering impertinence on the part of Beau Brummell, who, meeting her at a ball, coolly took the earrings out of her ears, telling her that she should not wear such things, as they hid the fine turn of her cheek, and the set of head upon her neck. Lady Hester frankly admitted, however, that it was her brilliant colouring that made her beauty, and once observed, in reply to a compliment on her appearance: 'If you were to take every feature in my face, and lay them one by one on the table, there is not a single one that would bear examination. The only thing is that, put together and lighted up, they look well enough. It is homogeneous ugliness, and nothing more.'

With Pitt's death in January, 1806, as by the stroke of a magic wand, all the power, all the glory, and all the grandeur came to a sudden end, and the great minister's favourite niece fell to the level of a private lady, with a moderate income, no influence, and a host of enemies. On his deathbed, Pitt had asked that an annuity of £1500 might be granted to Lady Hester, but in the end only £1200 was awarded to her, a trifling income for one with such exalted ideas of her own importance. A house was taken in Montagu Square, where Lady Hester entertained her half-brothers, Charles and James



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Stanhope, when their military duties allowed of their being in town. Here she led but a melancholy life, for her means would not allow of her keeping a carriage, and she fancied that it was incompatible with her dignity to drive in a hackney-coach, or to walk out attended by a servant. In 1809 Charles Stanhope, like his chief, Sir John Moore, fell at Corunna. Charles was Lady Hester's favourite brother, and tradition says that Sir John Moore was her lover. Be that as it may, she broke up her establishment in town at this time, and retired to a lonely cottage in Wales, where she amused herself in superintending her dairy and physicking the poor. But she suffered in health and spirits, the contrast of the present with the past was too bitter to be endured in solitude, and in 1810 she decided to go abroad, and spend a year or two in the south. A young medical man, Dr. Meryon,<sup>1</sup> was engaged to accompany her as her travelling physician, and the party further consisted of her brother, James Stanhope, and a friend, Mr. Nassau Sutton, together with two or three servants. Lady Hester was only thirty when her uncle died, but it does not seem to have been considered that she required any chaperonage, either at home or on her travels, nor does it appear that Lord Stanhope (who lived till 1816) took any further interest in her proceedings.

On February 10, 1810, the travellers sailed for the Mediterranean on board the frigate *Jason*. It is not necessary to follow them over the now familiar ground of the early part of their tour. Gibraltar (whence Captain Stanhope left to join his regiment at Cadiz), Malta, Athens, Constantinople, these were the first stopping-places, and in each Lady Hester was treated with great

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Lady Hester's chronicler.

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respect by the authorities, and went her own way in defiance of all native customs and prejudices. At Athens her party was joined by Lord Sligo, who was making some excavations in the neighbourhood, and by Lord Byron, who had just won fresh laurels by swimming the Hellespont. Lady Hester formed but a poor opinion of the poet, whose affectations she used to mimic with considerable effect. ‘I think Lord Byron was a strange character,’ she said, many years later. ‘His generosity was for a motive, his avarice was for a motive; one time he was mopish, and nobody was to speak to him; another, he was for being jocular with everybody. . . . At Athens I saw nothing in him but a well-bred man, like many others: for as for poetry, it is easy enough to write verses; and as for the thoughts, who knows where he got them? Many a one picks up some old book that nobody knows anything about, and gets his ideas out of it. He had a great deal of vice in his looks—his eyes set close together, and a contracted brow. O Lord! I am sure he was not a liberal man, whatever else he might be. The only good thing about his looks was this part [drawing her hand under her cheek, and down the front of her neck], and the curl on his forehead.’

The winter of 1810 was passed at Constantinople, and the early part of 1811 at the Baths of Brusa. As Lady Hester had decided to spend the following winter in Egypt, a Greek vessel was hired for herself and her party, which now consisted of two gentlemen, Mr. Bruce and Mr. Pearce, besides her usual retinue, and on October 23 the travellers set sail for Alexandria. After experiencing contrary winds for two or three weeks, the ship sprang a leak, and the cry of ‘All hands to the pumps’ showed that danger was imminent.

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Lady Hester took the announcement of the misfortune with the greatest calmness, dressed herself, and ordered her maid to pack a small box with a few necessaries. It soon became evident that the ship could not keep afloat much longer, and that the passengers and crew must take to the long-boat if they wished to escape with their lives. They contrived, in spite of the high sea that was running, to steer their boat into a little creek on a rock off the island of Rhodes, and here, without either food or water, they remained for thirty hours before they were rescued, and taken ashore. Even then their state was hardly less pitiable, for they were wet through, had no change of clothes, and possessed hardly enough money for their immediate necessities. Lady Hester described her adventure in the following letter, dated Rhodes, December, 1811 :—

‘I write one line by a ship which came in here for a few hours, just to tell you we are safe and well. Starving thirty hours on a bare rock, without even fresh water, being half naked and drenched with wet, having traversed an almost trackless country over dreadful rocks and mountains, laid me up at a village for a few days, but I have since crossed the island on an ass, going for six hours a day, which proves I am pretty well, now, at least. . . . My locket, and the valuable snuff-box Lord Sligo gave me, and two pelisses, are all I have saved—all the travelling-equipage for Smyrna is gone; the servants naked and unarmed; but the great loss of all is the medicine-chest, which saved the lives of so many travellers in Greece.’

As they had lost nearly all their clothes, and knew that it would be impossible to procure a European refit in these regions, the travellers decided to adopt

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Turkish costumes. Dr. Meryon made a journey to Smyrna, where he raised money, and bought necessary articles for the shipwrecked party at Rhodes. On his return, laden with purchases, after an absence of five weeks, 'the packing-cases were opened [to quote his own description], and we assumed our new dresses. Ignorant at that time of the distinctions of dress which prevail in Turkey, every one flattered himself that he was habited becomingly. Lady Hester and Mr. Bruce little suspected, what proved to be the case, that their exterior was that of small gentry, and Mr. Pearce and myself thought we were far from looking like *Chaôshes* with our yatagans stuck in our girdles.' Lady Hester, it may be noted, had determined to adopt the dress of a Turkish gentleman, in order that she might travel unveiled, a proceeding that would have been impossible in female costume.

The offer of a passage on a British frigate from Rhodes to Alexandria was gladly accepted by Lady Hester and her friends, and on February 14, 1812, they got their first glimpse of the Egyptian coast. After a fortnight spent in Alexandria, they proceeded to Cairo, where the pasha, who had never seen an Englishwoman of rank before, desired the honour of a visit from Lady Hester. In order to dazzle the eyes of her host, she arrayed herself in a magnificent Tunisian costume of purple velvet, elaborately embroidered in gold. For her turban and girdle she bought two cashmere shawls that cost £50 each, her pantaloons cost £40, her pelisse and waistcoat £50, her sabre £20, and her saddle £35, while other articles necessary for the completion of the costume cost a hundred pounds more. The pasha sent five horses to convey herself and her

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friends to the palace, and much honour was shown her in the number of silver sticks that walked before her, and in the privilege accorded to her of dismounting at the inner gate. After the interview, the pasha reviewed his troops before his distinguished visitor, and presented her with a charger, magnificently caparisoned, which she sent to England as a present to the Duke of York, her favourite among all the royal princes.

The next move was to Jaffa, where preparations were made for the regulation pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In her youth Lady Hester had been told by Samuel Brothers, the Prophet, that she was to visit Jerusalem, to pass seven years in the desert, to become the Queen of the Jews, and to lead forth a chosen people. Now, as she journeyed towards the Holy City with her cavalcade of eleven camels and thirteen horses, she saw the first part of the prophecy fulfilled, and laughingly avowed that she expected to see its final accomplishment. Lady Hester had now replaced her gorgeous Tunisian dress by a travelling Mameluke's costume, consisting of a satin vest, a red cloth jacket shaped like a spencer, and trimmed with gold lace, and loose, full trousers of the same cloth. Over this she wore a flowing white burnous, whose folds formed a becoming drapery to her majestic figure. In this costume she was generally mistaken by the natives for a young Bey with his moustaches not yet grown, but we are told that her assumption of male dress was severely criticised by the English residents in the Levant.

From Jerusalem the party made a leisurely tour through Syria, visiting Cæsarea, Acre, Nazareth, Sayda, where Lady Hester was entertained by her future enemy, the Emir Beshyr, prince of the Drûzes, and on September

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1, 1812, arrived at Damascus, where a lengthened stay was made. Lady Hester had been warned that it would be dangerous for a woman, unveiled and in man's dress, to enter Damascus, which was then one of the most fanatical towns in all the Turkish dominions. But the granddaughter of Pitt feared neither Turk nor Christian, and rode through the streets daily with uncovered face, and though crowds assembled to see her start, she received honours instead of the expected insults. 'A grave yet pleasing look,' writes her chronicler, 'an unembarrassed yet commanding demeanour, met the ideas of the Turks, whose manners are of this caste. . . . When it is considered how fanatical the people of Damascus were, and in what great abhorrence they held infidels; that native Christians could only inhabit a particular quarter of the town; and that no one of these could ride on horseback within the walls, or wear as part of his dress any coloured cloth or showy turban, it will be a matter for surprise how completely these prejudices were set aside in favour of Lady Hester, and of those persons who were with her. She rode out every day, and according to the custom of the country, coffee was poured on the ground before her horse to do her honour. It was said that, in going through a bazaar, all the people rose up as she passed, an honour never paid but to a pasha, or to the mufti.'

From the moment of her arrival at Damascus, Lady Hester had busied herself in arranging for a journey to the ruins of Palmyra. The expedition was considered not only difficult but dangerous, and she was assured that a large body of troops would be necessary to protect her from the robber tribes of the desert. While the practicability of the enterprise was still being anxiously

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discussed by her Turkish advisers, Lady Hester received a visit from a certain Nasar, son of Mahannah, Emir of the Anizys<sup>1</sup> (the collective name given to several of the Bedouin tribes ranging that part of the desert), who told her that he had heard of her proposed expedition, and that he came to warn her against attempting to cross the desert under military escort, since in that case she would be treated as an enemy by the tribes. But, he added, if she would place herself under the protection of the Arabs, and rely upon their honour, they would pledge themselves to conduct her from Hamah to Palmyra and back again in safety. The result of this interview was that Lady Hester declined the pasha's offer of troops, and leaving the doctor to wind up affairs at Damascus she departed alone, ostensibly for Hamah, a city on the highroad to Aleppo. But having secretly arranged a meeting with the Emir Mahannah in the desert, she rode straight to his camp, accompanied by Monsieur and Madame Lascaris, who were living in the neighbourhood, and by a Bedouin guide. In a letter to General Oakes, dated January 25, 1813, she gives the following account of her first experiment upon the good faith of the Arabs:—

‘I went with the great chief, Mahannah el Fadel (who commands 40,000 men), into the desert for a week, and marched for three days with their camp. I was treated with the greatest respect and hospitality, and it was the most curious sight I ever saw; horses and mares fed upon camel's milk; Arabs living upon little else except rice; the space around me covered with living things; 1600 camels coming to water from one tribe

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Meryon's somewhat erratic spelling of Oriental names is followed throughout this memoir.

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only ; the old poets from the banks of the Euphrates singing the praises of the ancient heroes ; women with lips dyed bright blue, and nails red, and hands all over flowers and different designs ; a chief who is obeyed like a great king ; starvation and pride so mixed that really I could not have had an idea of it. . . . However, I have every reason to be perfectly contented with their conduct towards me, and I am the *Queen* with them all.'

The preparations for the journey occupied nearly two months, the cavalcade being on a magnificent scale. Twenty-two camels were to carry the baggage, twenty-five horsemen formed the retinue, in addition to the Bedouin escort, led by Nasar, the Emir's son. Still the risk was great, for Lady Hester carried with her many articles of value, and of course was wholly at the mercy of her conductors, who got their living by plunder. But she sought the remains of Zenobia as well as the ruins of Palmyra, and had set her heart upon seeing the city which had been governed by one of her own sex, and owed its chief magnificence to her genius. Mr. Bruce, writing to General Oakes just before the start, observes : ' If Lady Hester succeeds in this undertaking, she will at least have the merit of being the first European female who has ever visited this once celebrated city. Who knows but she may prove another Zenobia, and be destined to restore it to its ancient splendour ? '

The cavalcade set out on March 20, a sum of about £50 being paid over to the Emir for his escort, with the promise of twice as much more on the safe return of the party. The journey seems to have been uneventful save for the occasional sulks of the Bedouin leader, and the petty thefts of his followers. The inhabitants of



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Palmyra had been warned of the approach of the ‘great white queen,’ who rode a mare worth forty purses, and had in her possession a book which instructed her where to find treasure, and a bag of herbs with which she could transmute stones into gold. By way of welcome a body of about two hundred men, armed with matchlocks, went out to meet her, and displayed for her amusement a mock attack on, and defence of, a caravan. The guides led the cavalcade up through the long colonnade, which is terminated by a triumphal arch, the shaft of each of the pillars having a projecting pedestal, or console, on which a statue once stood. ‘What was our surprise,’ writes Dr. Meryon, ‘to see, as we rode up the avenue, that several beautiful girls had been placed on these pedestals in the most graceful postures, and with garlands in their hands. . . . On each side of the arch other girls stood by threes, while a row of six was arranged across the gate of the arch with thyrsi in their hands. While Lady Hester advanced, these living statues remained immovable on their pedestals; but when she had passed, they leaped to the ground, and joined in a dance by her side. On reaching the triumphal arch, the whole in groups, both men and girls, danced round her. Here some bearded elders chanted verses in her praise, and all the spectators joined in the chorus. Lady Hester herself seemed to partake of the emotions to which her presence in this remote spot had given rise. Nor was the wonder of the Palmyrenes less than our own. They beheld with amazement a woman who had ventured thousands of miles from her own country, and crossed a waste where hunger and thirst were the least of the perils to be dreaded.’ It may be observed that the people of Syria, excited by the achievements of Sir Sydney

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Smith, had begun to imagine that their land might be occupied by the English, and perhaps regarded Lady Hester as an English princess who had come to prepare the way, if not to take possession.

The travellers were only allowed a week in which to examine the ruins of Palmyra, being hurried away by Prince Nasar on the plea that an attack was expected from a hostile tribe. After resting for a time at Hamah, and taking an affectionate farewell of their friendly Bedouins (Lady Hester was enrolled as an Anizy Arab of the tribe of Melken), they journeyed to Laodicea, which was believed to be free from the plague that was raging in other parts of Syria, and here the summer months were spent. In October Mr. Bruce received letters which obliged him to return at once to England, and, as Dr. Meryon observes, ‘he therefore reluctantly prepared to quit a lady in whose society he had so long travelled, and from whose conversation and experience of the world so much useful knowledge was to be acquired.’ Lady Hester had now renounced the idea of returning to Europe, at any rate for the present. She had some thoughts of taking a journey overland to Bussora, and had also entered into a correspondence with the chief of the Wahabys, with a view to travelling across the desert to visit him in his capital of Deráyeh; but she finally decided on remaining for some months longer in Syria. She had heard of a house, once a monastery, at Mar Elias, near Sayda (the ancient Sidon), which could be hired for a small rent. The house was taken, the luggage shipped to Sayda, and Lady Hester and her doctor were preparing to follow, when both fell ill of a malignant fever, which they believed to be a species of plague. For some time Lady Hester’s life was despaired

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of, but thanks to her splendid constitution, she pulled through, though she was not strong enough to leave Laodicea until January, 1814.

Lady Hester had now become a sojourner instead of a traveller in the East, and, abandoning European customs altogether, she conformed entirely to the mode of life of the Orientals. Mar Elias, which was situated on a spur of Mount Lebanon, in a barren and rocky region, consisted of a one-storied stone building with flat roofs, enclosing a small paved court. 'Since her illness,' writes Dr. Meryon, 'Lady Hester's character seemed to have changed. She became simple in her habits, almost to cynicism. Scanning men and things with a wonderful intelligence, she commented upon them as if the motives of human action were laid open to her inspection.' The plague having again broken out in the neighbourhood, the party at Mar Elias were insulated upon their rock, and during the early days of their tenancy were in much the same position as the crew of a well-victualled ship at sea, having abundance of fresh provisions, but no books, no newspapers, and no intercourse with the outer world.

In the autumn an expedition to the ruins of Baalbec was undertaken, and at Beyrout, on the way home, a servant brought the news that a Zâym, or Capugi Bashi,<sup>1</sup> was at that town on his road to Sayda, and was reported to be going to capture Lady Hester, and carry her to Constantinople. Her ladyship received the announcement with her usual composure, and it turned out that she had long expected the Capugi Bashi, and knew the object of his visit. Scarcely had the travellers arrived at Mar Elias than a message came to Lady Hester,

<sup>1</sup> Nominally a door-keeper, according to Dr. Meryon, but actually a Turkish official of high rank.

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requesting her to meet the Zâym at the house of the governor of Sayda, since it was not customary for a Turkish official to go to a Christian's house. But in this case the haughty Moslem had reckoned without his host. Lady Hester returned so spirited an answer that the Zâym at once ordered his horses, and galloped over to Mar Elias. The doctor and the secretary, knowing nothing of the mission, felt considerable doubt of his intentions, and put loaded pistols in their girdles, determined that if he had a bowstring under his robes, no use should be made of it while they had a bullet at his disposal. In the Turkish dominions, it must be understood, a Capugi Bashi seldom comes into the provinces unless for some affair of strangling, beheading, confiscation, or imprisonment, and his presence is the more dreaded, as it is never known on whose head the blow will fall.

In this case, fortunately, the Capugi's visit had no sinister motive. The fact was now divulged that Lady Hester had been given a manuscript, said to have been copied by a monk from the records of a Frank monastery in Syria, which disclosed the hiding-places of immense hoards of money buried in certain specified spots in the cities of Ascalon and Sayda. Lady Hester, having convinced herself of the genuineness of the manuscript, had written to the Sultan through Mr., afterwards Sir Robert, Liston, for permission to make the necessary excavations, at the same time offering to forego all pecuniary benefit that might accrue from her labours. The custom of burying money in times of danger is so common in the East that credence was easily lent to the story, while the fact that treasure might lie for centuries untouched, even though the secret of its existence was

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known to several persons, was possible in a country where digging among ruins always excites dangerous suspicions in the minds of the authorities, and where the discovery of a jar of coins almost invariably leads to the ruin of the finder, who is supposed to keep back more than he reveals.

The Sultan evidently believed that the matter was worth examination, for he had sent the Capugi from Constantinople to invest Lady Hester with greater authority over the Turks than had ever been granted even to a European ambassador. It was arranged that the first excavations should be made at Ascalon, and though Lady Hester, having only just returned from Baalbec, felt disinclined to set out at once on another long journey, the Zâym urged her to lose no time, and himself went on to Acre to make the necessary preparations. As her income barely sufficed for her own expenditure, she resolved to ask the English Government to pay the cost of her search, holding that the honour which would thereby accrue to the English name was a sufficient justification for her demand.

‘I shall beg of you,’ she said to Dr. Meryon, ‘to keep a regular account of every article, and will then send in my bill to Government by Mr. Liston; when, if they refuse to pay me, I shall put it in the newspapers, and expose them. And this I shall let them know very plainly, as I consider it my right, and not as a favour; for if Sir A. Paget put down the cost of his servants’ liveries after his embassy to Vienna, and made Mr. Pitt pay him £70,000 for four years, I cannot see why I should not do the same.’

On February 15, 1815, Lady Hester left Mar Elias on horseback, followed by her usual retinue, and on

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arriving at Acre spent about three weeks in preparing for the work at Ascalon. In compliance with the firmans sent by the Porte to all the governors of Syria, she was treated with distinctions usually paid to no one under princely rank. 'Whenever she went out,' writes Dr. Meryon, 'she was followed by a crowd of spectators; and the curiosity and admiration which she had very generally excited throughout Syria were now increased by her supposed influence in the affairs of Government, in having a Capugi Bashi at her command. . . . No Turk now paid her a visit without wearing his mantle of ceremony, and every circumstance showed the ascendancy she had gained in public opinion.' In addition to her own six tents, twenty more were furnished for her suite, besides twenty-two tent-pitchers, twelve mules to carry the baggage, and twelve camels to carry the tents. To Lady Hester's use was appropriated a gorgeous tilted palanquin or litter, covered with crimson cloth, and ornamented with gilded balls. In case she preferred riding, her mare and her favourite black ass were led in front of the litter. A hundred men of the Hawàry cavalry escorted the procession, which left Acre on March 18, and arrived at Jaffa ten days later. Here a short halt was made, and on the last day of March they set off for Ascalon, their animals laden with shovels, pickaxes, and baskets. On arriving at their destination the tents were pitched in the midst of the ruins, while a cottage was fitted up for Lady Hester without the walls. Orders were at once despatched to the neighbouring villages for relays of labourers to work at the excavations. These men received no pay, being requisitioned by Government, but they were well fed and humanely treated by their English employer.

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The excavations were carried on for about a fortnight on the site indicated in the mysterious paper. During the first three days nothing was found except bones, fragments of pillars, and a few vases and bottles; but on the fourth day a fine, though mutilated, colossal statue was discovered, which apparently represented a deified king. Dr. Meryon made a sketch of the marble, and pointed out to Lady Hester that her labours had at least brought to light a treasure that would be valuable in the eyes of lovers of art, and that the ruins would be memorable for the enterprise of a woman who had rescued the remains of antiquity from oblivion. To his astonishment and dismay she replied, 'It is my intention to break up the statue, and have it thrown into the sea, precisely in order that such a report may not get abroad, and I lose with the Porte all the merit of my disinterestedness.' In vain Dr. Meryon represented that such an act would be an unpardonable vandalism, and was the less excusable since the Turks had neither claimed the statue, nor protested against its preservation. Her only answer was: 'Malicious people may say I came to search for antiquities for my country, and not for treasures for the Porte. So, go this instant, take with you half-a-dozen stout fellows, and break it into a thousand pieces.' Michaud, in his account of the affair, says that the Turks clamoured for the destruction of the statue, believing that the trunk was full of gold, and that Lady Hester had it broken up in order to prove to them their error. Be this as it may, reports were afterwards circulated in Ascalon that the statue had actually contained treasure, half of which was handed over to the Porte, and half kept by Lady Hester.

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On the sixth day two large stone troughs were discovered, upon which lay four granite pillars. This sight revived the hopes of the searchers, for it was thought that the mass of granite could not have fallen into such a position accidentally, but must have been placed there to conceal something of value. Great was the disappointment of all concerned when, on removing the pillars, the troughs were found to be empty. The excavations of the next four days having produced nothing of any value, the work was brought to an end, by Lady Hester's desire, on April 14. She had come to the conclusion that when Gezzar Pasha embellished the city of Acre by digging for marble among the ruins of Ascalon, he had been fortunate enough to discover the treasure, and she believed that his apparent mania for building was only a cloak to conceal his real motives for excavating. The officials and soldiers were handsomely rewarded for their trouble, and Lady Hester set out on her homeward journey, minus her tents, palanquin, military escort, and other emblems of grandeur, but with no loss of dignity or serenity.

On returning to Mar Elias, she caused some excavations to be made near Sayda, but with no better success, and after a few days the work was abandoned. Lady Hester had been obliged to borrow a sum of money for her expenses from Mr. Barker, the British consul at Aleppo, and now, observes Dr. Meryon, 'as she had throughout proposed to herself no advantage but the celebrity which success would bring on her own name and that of the English nation, and as she had acted with the cognisance of our minister at Constantinople, she fancied that she had a claim upon the English Government for her expenses. Accordingly, she sent



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our ambassador an account of her proceedings, and after showing that all she had done was for the credit of her country, she asserted her right to be reimbursed. She was unsuccessful, however, in her application, and the expenses weighed heavily upon her means. Yet hitherto she had never been in debt, and by great care and economy she still contrived to keep out of it.'

Lady Hester having apparently decided to spend the remainder of her days in Syria, Dr. Meryon informed her that he was anxious to return to his own country, but that he would not leave her until a substitute had been engaged. Accordingly, Giorgio, the Greek interpreter, was despatched to England to engage the doctor's successor, and to execute a number of commissions for his mistress. During the autumn Lady Hester was actively employed in stirring up the authorities to avenge the death of a French traveller, Colonel Boutin, who had been murdered by the Ansárys on the road between Hamah and Laodicea. As the pasha of the district had made no effort to trace or punish the murderers, she had taken the matter into her own hands, holding that the common cause of travellers demanded that such a crime should not go unpunished. Dr. Meryon vainly tried to dissuade her from this course of action, urging that the French consuls were bound to sift the affair, and that she, in taking so active a part, was exposing herself to the vengeance of the mountain tribes. As usual, the only effect of remonstrance was to make her more determined to persevere in the course she had marked out for herself. In the result, she succeeded in inducing the pasha to send a punitive expedition into the mountains, and herself directed the commandant, by information secretly obtained, where the criminals were

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to be found. Mustafa Aga Berber, governor of the district, led the expedition, and carried fire and sword into the Ansáry country. It was reported that he burnt the villages of the assassins, and sent several heads to the pasha as tokens of his victories. Lady Hester received a vote of thanks from the French Chamber of Deputies, after a speech by Comte Delaborde, explaining the services she had rendered.

News of the great events that were taking place in France had now reached Sayda, and Lady Hester, whose foible it was to think that the successors of Pitt could do no right, was highly displeased at the action of the British Government. She gave vent to her sentiments in the following letter, dated April 1816, to her cousin the Marquis (afterwards Duke) of Buckingham :—

‘ You cannot doubt that a woman of my character and (I presume to say) understanding must have held in contempt and aversion all the statesmen of the present day, whose unbounded ignorance and duplicity have brought ruin on France, have spread their own shame through all Europe, and have exposed themselves not only to ridicule, but to the curses of present and future generations. One great mind, one single, enlightened statesman, whose virtues had equalled his talents, was all that was wanting to effect, at this unexampled period, the welfare of all Europe, by taking advantage of events the most extraordinary that have occurred in any era. . . . Cease therefore to torment me. I will not live in Europe, even were I, in flying from it, compelled to beg my bread. Once only will I go to France, to see you and James, but only that once. I will not be a martyr for nothing. The granddaughter of Chatham, the niece of the illustrious Pitt, feels herself

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blush that she was born in England—that England who has made her accursed gold the counterpoise to justice; that England who puts weeping humanity in irons, who has employed the valour of her troops, destined for the defence of her national honour, as the instrument to enslave a freeborn people; and who has exposed to ridicule and humiliation a monarch [Louis xviii.] who might have gained the goodwill of his subjects if those intriguing English had left him to stand or fall upon his own merits.’

The announcement of the arrival of the Princess of Wales at Acre, and the possibility that she might extend her journey to Sayda, induced Lady Hester to embark for Antioch, where she professed to have business with the British consul. It was considered an act of great daring on her part to go into a district inhabited entirely by the Ansárys, on whom she had lately wrought so signal a vengeance. But the Ansárys had apparently no desire to bring upon themselves a second punitive expedition, and though Lady Hester spent most of her time in a retired cottage outside the town, in defiance of the warning that her life was in danger, the tribes forbore to molest her. In September she returned to Mar Elias; and, a few weeks later, Giorgio returned from England, bringing with him an English surgeon and twenty-seven packing-cases filled with presents, to be distributed among Lady Hester’s Turkish friends and acquaintances. On January 18, 1817, Dr. Meryon, having initiated his successor into Eastern manners and customs, took leave of his employer, and sailed for Europe, little thinking that he would ever set foot in Syria again.





*Art. Supra 62*

*Lady Hester Stanhope.*  
*From*  
*a drawing by R. J. Hamilton.*





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## PART II

DURING the next ten or twelve years, we get but a few scanty glimpses of the white Queen of the Desert. After Dr. Meryon's departure, Lady Hester removed to a house in the village of Dar Jôon, or Djoun, a few miles from Mar Elias. To this house she added considerably, laid out some magnificent gardens, and enclosed the whole within high walls, after the manner of a mediæval fortress. Here she seems to have passed her time in encouraging the Drûzes to rise against Ibrahim Pasha, intriguing against the British consuls, and attempting to bolster up the declining authority of the Sultan. In the intervals of political business she occupied herself with superintending her building and gardening operations, physicking the sick, and tyrannising over her numerous servants. At Mar Elias, which she still kept in her own hands, she maintained an eccentric old Frenchman, General Loustaunau,<sup>1</sup> who had formerly been in the service of a Hindu rajah, but who, in his forlorn old age, had wandered to Syria, and there, by dint of applying scriptural texts to contemporary events, had earned the title of a prophet. Like Samuel Brothers, he prophesied marvellous things of Lady Hester's future, which she, rendered credulous by her solitary life in a mystic land, where her own power and importance were the chief facts in her mental horizon, came at length to believe.

In the *Memoirs of a Babylonian Princess* by the Emira Asmar, daughter of the Emir Abdallah Asmar, the author tells us that as a girl she paid a long visit

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Meryon's spelling.



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to the Emir Beshyr, prince of the Drûzes. During this visit, which apparently took place in the early 'twenties,' she was sent with a present of fruit to a neighbour's house, and there found a guest, a tall and splendid figure, arrayed in masculine costume, and engaged in smoking a narghila. The stranger, who talked Arabic with elegance and fluency, discoursed on the subject of astrology, and tried to dissuade the Emira from taking a projected journey to the west, where she declared the sun had set, and the hearts of the people retained not a spark of the virtues of their forefathers. 'Soon afterwards,' continues the author, 'she rose, and took her departure, attended by a large retinue. A spirited charger stood at the gate, champing the bit with fiery impatience. She put her foot in the stirrup, and vaulting nimbly into the saddle, which she bestrode like a man, started off at a rapid pace, galloping over rocks and mountains in advance of her suite, with a fearlessness and address that would have done honour to a Mameluke.' The stranger was, of course, none other than Lady Hester Stanhope, who, at that time, was on friendly terms with the Emir Beshyr, afterwards her bitterest enemy.

In 1826 Lady Hester wrote to invite Dr. Meryon to return to her service for a time, and he, who seems all his life to have 'heard the East a-calling,' could not resist the invitation, though his movements were now hampered by a wife and children. He began at once to make preparations for his departure, but was unable to start before September 1827. Meanwhile, Lady Hester had been gulled by an English traveller, designated as 'X.' in her letters, who had induced her to believe that he was empowered by the Duke of Sussex, the Duke of Bedford, and a committee of Freemasons, to offer her

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such sums as would extricate her out of her embarrassments, and to settle an income upon her for life. How a woman who professed to have an almost supernatural insight into the characters and thoughts of men, could have been deceived by this story, it is hard to understand ; but apparently the difficulties of her situation, occasioned by her custom of making large presents to the pashas in order to keep up her authority, as well as by her benevolence to the poor in her neighbourhood, rendered her willing to catch at any straw for help. This 'X.' had promised to send her a hundred purses for her current expenses, and to bring out from England masons and carpenters to enlarge her dwelling, in order that she might entertain the many distinguished people who desired to come and see her. In a letter to Dr. Meryon on this subject, Lady Hester writes :—

‘ If X.’s story is true, and my debts, amounting to nearly £10,000, are to be paid, then I shall go on making sublime and philosophical discoveries, and employing myself in deep, abstract studies. In that case I shall want a mason, carpenter, etc., income made out £4000 a year, and £1000 more for people like you, and £500 ready money that I may stand clear. In the event that all that has been told me is a lie, . . . I shall give up everything for life to my creditors, and throw myself as a beggar on Asiatic charity, and wander far without one parra in my pocket, with the mare from the stable of Solomon in one hand, and a sheaf of the corn of Beni-Israel in the other. I shall meet death, or that which I believe to be written, which no mortal can efface.’

On September 7, Dr. Meryon and his family embarked at Leghorn for Cyprus, but on nearing Candia their merchant brig, which was taking out stores to the

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Turks, was attacked by a Greek vessel, whose officers took possession of the cargo, and also of all the passengers' property, except that belonging to the English party, which they left unmolested. The Italian captain was obliged to put back to Leghorn, and here Dr. Meryon heard the news of the battle of Navarino, and of the shelter afforded by Lady Hester Stanhope to two hundred refugee Europeans from Sayda. By this time she was at daggers-drawn with the Emir Beshyr, whose rival she had helped and protected. The Emir revenged himself by publishing in the village an order that all her native servants were to return to their homes, upon pain of losing their property and their lives. 'I gave them all their option,' she writes. 'And most of them remained firm. Since that, he has threatened to seize and murder them here, which he shall not do without taking my life too. Besides this, he has given orders in all the villages that men, women, and children who render me the smallest service shall be cut in a thousand pieces. My servants cannot go out, and the peasants cannot approach the house. Therefore, I am in no very pleasant situation, being deprived of the necessary supplies of food, and what is worse, of water; for all the water here is brought on mules' backs up a great steep.'

Dr. Meryon was unable to resume his voyage at this time, but in 1828, the news that a malignant fever had attacked the household at Jôon, and carried off Lady Hester's companion, Miss Williams, gave rise to fresh plans for a visit to Syria. The doctor had, however, so much difficulty in overcoming his wife's fears of the voyage, that it was not until November, 1830, that he could induce her to embark at Marseilles on a

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vessel bound for the East. The party arrived at Beyrout on December 8, and found that Lady Hester had sent camels and asses to bring them on their way, together with a characteristic note to the effect that it would give her much pleasure to see the doctor, but that, as for his family, they must not expect any other attentions than such as would make them comfortable in their new home. She hoped that Dr. Meryon would not take this ill, as she had warned him that she did not think English ladies could make themselves happy in Syria, and, therefore, he who had chosen to bring them must take the consequences. This letter was but the first of a long series of affronts put upon Mrs. Meryon, the result of Lady Hester's dislike of her own sex, and probably also of her objection to the presence of another Englishwoman in a spot where she had reigned so long as the only specimen of her race.

A cottage had been provided in the village of Jôon for the travellers, and the ladies were escorted thither by the French secretary, while the doctor hastened to report himself to Lady Hester, who received him with the greatest cordiality, kissing him on both cheeks, and placing him beside her on the sofa. Remembering her overweening pride of birth, he was astonished at his reception, more especially as, in the early part of her travels, she had never even condescended to take his arm, that honour being reserved exclusively for members of the aristocracy. He found her ladyship in good health and spirits, but barely provided with the necessities of life, having been robbed of nearly all her articles of value by the native servants during her last illness. A rush-bottomed chair, a deal table, dishes of common yellow earthenware, bone-handled knives and

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forks, and two or three silver spoons, were all that remained of her former grandeur, and the dinner was on a par with the furniture.

The house, which had been hired at a rental of £20 from a Turkish merchant, had been greatly enlarged, and the gardens, with their summer-houses, covered alleys, and serpentine walks, were superior to most English gardens of the same size. Lady Hester's constant outlay in building arose from her idea that people would fly to her for succour and protection during the revolutions that she believed to be impending all over the world; her camels, asses, and mules were kept with the same view, and her servants were taught to look forward with awe to events of a supernatural nature, when their services and energies would be taxed to the utmost. In choosing a solitary life in the wilderness, far removed from all the comforts and pleasures of civilisation, Lady Hester seems to have been actuated by her craving for absolute power, which could not be gratified in any European community. It was her pleasure to dwell apart, surrounded by dependants and slaves, and out of reach of that influence and restraint which are necessarily endured by each member of a civilised society. She had become more violent in her temper than formerly, and treated her servants with great severity when they were negligent of their duties. Her maids and female slaves she punished summarily, and boasted that there was nobody who could give such a slap in the face, when required, as she could. At Mar Elias her servants, when tired of her tyranny, frequently absconded by night, and took refuge in Sayda, only two miles away; but at Dar Jôon their retreat was cut off by mountain tracts, inhabited only by wolves and

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jackals, and they were consequently almost helpless in the hands of their stern mistress. The establishment at this time consisted of between thirty and forty servants, labourers, and slaves, most of whom are described as dirty, lazy, and dishonest. Between them they did badly the work that half-a-dozen Europeans would have done respectably, but then the Europeans would not have stood the slaps and scoldings that the natives took as a matter of course.

For the last fifteen years Lady Hester had seldom left her bed till between two and five o'clock in the afternoon, nor returned to it before the same hour next morning; while for four years she had never stirred beyond the precincts of her own domain, though she took some air and exercise in the garden. Except when she was asleep, her bell was incessantly ringing, her servants were running to and fro, and the whole house was kept in commotion. During the greater part of the day she sat up in bed, writing, talking, scolding, and interviewing her work-people. Few of her *employés* escaped from her presence without reproof, and as no one was allowed to exercise his own discretion in his work, her directing spirit was always in the full flow of activity. 'On one and the same day,' says Dr. Meryon, 'I have known her to dictate papers that concerned the political welfare of a pashalik, and descend to trivial details about the composition of a house-paint, the making of butter, drenching a sick horse, choosing lambs, or cutting out a maid's apron. The marked characteristic of her mind was the necessity that she laboured under of incessantly talking.' Her conversations, we are told, frequently lasted for seven or eight hours at a stretch, and at least one of her visitors was

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kept so long in discourse that he fainted away with fatigue. Dr. Meryon bears witness to her marvellous colloquial powers, her fund of anecdote, and her talent for mimicry, but observes that every one who conversed with her retired humbled from her presence, since her language was always calculated to bring men down to their proper level, to strip off affectation, and to expose conceit.

At this time her political influence was on the wane, but a few years previously, when her financial affairs were in a more flourishing condition, and when it was observed that the pashas valued her opinion and feared her censure, she had obtained an almost despotic power over the neighbouring tribes. A remarkable proof of her personal courage, and also of the supernatural awe with which she was regarded, was shown by her open defiance of the Emir Beshyr, in whose principality she lived, but who was unable to reduce her, either by threats or persecution, to even a nominal submission to his rule. Not only did she give public utterance to her contemptuous opinion of the Emir, but she openly assisted his relation and rival, the Sheikh Beshyr; yet no vengeance either of the bow-string or the poisoned cup rewarded her rebellion or her intrigues.

Her religious views, at this time, were decidedly complicated in character. She firmly believed in astrology, of which she had made a special study, and to some extent in demonology. But more remarkable was her faith in the early coming of a Messiah, or Mahedi, on which occasion she expected to play a glorious part. The prophecies of Samuel Brothers and of General Lousaunau had taken firm possession of her mind, more especially since their words had been corro-

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borated by a native soothsayer, Metta by name, who brought her an Arabic book which, he said, contained allusions to herself. Finding a credulous listener, he read and expounded a passage relating to a European woman who was to come and live on Mount Lebanon at a certain epoch, and obtain power and influence greater than a sultan's. A boy without a father was to join her there, whose destiny was to be fulfilled under her wing; while the coming of the Mahedi, who was to ride into Jerusalem on a horse born saddled, would be preceded by famine, pestilence, and other calamities. For a long time Lady Hester was persuaded that the Duc de Reichstadt was the boy in question, but after his death she fixed upon another youth. In expectation of the coming of the Mahedi she kept two thoroughbred mares, which no one was suffered to mount. One of these animals, named Laila, had a curious malformation of the back, not unlike a Turkish saddle in shape, and was destined by its mistress to bear the Mahedi into Jerusalem, while on the other, Lulu, Lady Hester expected to ride by his side on the great day. 'Hundreds and thousands of distressed persons,' she was accustomed to say, 'will come to me for assistance and shelter. I shall have to wade in blood, but it is the will of God, and I shall not be afraid.' Borne up by these glorious expectations, she never discussed her debts, her illnesses, and her other trials, without at the same time picturing to herself a brighter future, when the neglect with which she had been treated by her family would meet with its just punishment, and her star would rise again to gladden the world, and more especially those who had been faithful to her in the time of adversity.



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As soon as Mrs. Meryon was settled in her new home, and had recovered from the fatigue of the journey, Lady Hester appointed a day for her reception. What happened at the momentous interview we are not told, except that at the close Lady Hester attired her visitor in a handsome Turkish spencer of gold brocade, and wound an embroidered muslin turban round her head. Unfortunately, Mrs. Meryon, not understanding the Eastern custom of robing honoured guests, took off the garments before she went away, and laid them on a table, a grievous breach of etiquette in her hostess's eyes. Still, matters went on fairly smoothly until, about the end of January, a messenger came from Damascus to ask that Dr. Meryon might be allowed to go thither to cure a friend of the pasha's, who had an affection of the mouth. Lady Hester was anxious that the doctor should obey the call, but, greatly to her annoyance, he entirely declined to leave his wife and children alone for three or four weeks in a strange land, where they could not make themselves understood by the people about them. In vain Lady Hester tried to frighten Mrs. Meryon into consenting to her husband's departure by assuring her that there were Dervishes who could inflict all sorts of evil on her by means of charms, if she persisted in her refusal. Mrs. Meryon quietly replied that her husband could go if he chose, but that it would not be with her goodwill. From that hour was begun a system of hostility towards the doctor's wife, which never ceased until her departure from the country.

Lady Hester was not above taking a leaf out of the book of her own enemy, the Emir Beshyr, for she used her influence to prevent the villagers from supplying

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the wants of the recalcitrant family, who now began to make preparations for their departure. They were obliged, however, to wait for remittances from England, and also for Lady Hester's consent to their leaving Jôon, since none of the natives would have dared lend their camels or mules for such a purpose, and even the consular agents at Sayda would have declined to mix themselves up in any business which might bring upon them the vengeance of the Queen of the Desert. Meanwhile, a truce seems to have been concluded between the principals, and Lady Hester again invited the doctor's visits, contenting herself with sarcastic remarks about henpecked husbands, and the caprices of foolish women. She graciously consented to dispense with his services about the beginning of April, and promised to engage a vessel at Sayda to convey him and his family to Cyprus. Before his departure she produced a list of her debts, which then amounted to £14,000. The greater part of this sum, which had been borrowed at a high rate of interest from native usurers, had been spent in assisting Abdallah Pasha, the family of the Sheikh Beshyr, and many other victims of political malignity.

The unwonted luxury of an admiring and submissive listener led the lonely woman to discourse of the glories of her youth, and the virtues of her hero-in-chief, William Pitt. She spoke of his passion for Miss Eden, daughter of Lord Auckland, who, she said, was the only woman she could have wished him to marry. 'Poor Mr. Pitt almost broke his heart, when he gave her up,' she declared. 'But he considered that she was not a woman to be left at will when business might require it, and he sacrificed his feelings to his

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sense of public duty. . . . "There were also other reasons," Mr. Pitt would say; "there is her mother, such a chatterer!—and then the family intrigues. I can't keep them out of my house; and, for my king and country's sake, I must remain a free man." Yet Mr. Pitt was a man just made for domestic life, who would have enjoyed retirement, digging his own garden, and doing it cleverly too. . . . He had so much urbanity too! I recollect returning late from a ball, when he was gone to bed fatigued; there were others besides myself, and we made a good deal of noise. I said to him next morning, "I am afraid we disturbed you last night." "Not at all," he replied; "I was dreaming of the masque of *Comus*, and when I heard you all so gay, it seemed a pleasant reality. . . ." Nobody would have suspected how much feeling he had for people's comforts, who came to see him. Sometimes he would say to me, "Hester, you know we have got such a one coming down. I believe his wound is hardly well yet, and I heard him say that he felt much relieved by fomentations of such an herb; perhaps you will see that he finds in his chamber all that he wants." Of another he would say, "I think he drinks asses' milk; I should like him to have his morning draught." And I, who was born with such sensibility that I must fidget myself about everybody, was sure to exceed his wishes.

After describing Mr. Pitt's kindness and consideration towards his household, Lady Hester related a pathetic history of a faithful servant, who, in the pecuniary distress of his master, had served him for several years with the purest disinterestedness. 'I was so touched by her eloquent and forcible manner of recounting the story,' writes the soft-hearted doctor,

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‘and with the application I made of it to my own tardiness in going to her in her distress, together with my present intention of leaving her, that I burst into tears, and wept bitterly. She soothed my feelings, endeavoured to calm my emotions, and disclaimed all intention of conveying any allusion to me. This led her to say how little malice she ever entertained towards any one, even those who had done her injury, much less towards me, who had always shown my attachment to her; and she added that, even now, although she was going to lose me, her thoughts did not run so much on her own situation as on what would become of me; and I firmly believed her.’

Dr. Meryon sailed from Sayda on April 7, 1831, and for the next six years we only hear of the strange household on Mount Lebanon through the reports of chance visitors. After the siege of Acre by Ibrahim Pasha in the winter of 1831-32, the remnant of the population fled to the mountains, and Lady Hester, whose hospitality was always open to the distressed, declares that for three years her house was like the Tower of Babel. In 1832 Lamartine paid a visit to Jôon, which he has described in his *Voyage en Orient*. He seems to have been graciously received, though his hostess candidly informed him that she had never heard his name before. He explained, rather to her amusement, that he had written verses which were in the mouths of thousands of his countrymen, and she having read his character and destiny, assured him that his Arabian descent was proved by the high arch of his instep, and that, like every Arab, he was a poet by nature. Lamartine, in return, represents himself as profoundly impressed by his interview with this ‘Circe

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of the East,' denies that he perceived in her any traces of insanity, and declares that he should not be surprised if a part of the destiny she prophesied for herself were realised—at least to the extent of an empire in Arabia, or a throne in Jerusalem.

Lady Hester formed a less favourable opinion of M. Lamartine than she allowed him to perceive, and she was greatly annoyed at the passages referring to herself that appeared in his book. Speaking of him and his visit some years later, she observed: 'The people of Europe are all, or at least the greater part of them, fools, with their ridiculous grins, their affected ways, and their senseless habits. . . . Look at M. Lamartine getting off his horse half-a-dozen times to kiss his dog, and take him out of his bandbox to feed him, on the route from Beyrout; the very muleteers thought him a fool. And then that way of thrusting his hands into his pockets, and sticking out his legs as far as he could—what is that like? M. Lamartine is no poet, in my estimation, though he may be an elegant versifier; he has no sublime ideas. Compare his ideas with Shakespeare's—that was indeed a real poet. . . . M. Lamartine, with his straight body and straight fingers, pointed his toes in my face, and then turned to his dog, and held long conversations with him. He thought to make a great effect when he was here, but he was grievously mistaken.' It may be noted that all Lady Hester's male visitors 'pointed their toes in her face,' in the hope of being accredited with the arched instep that she held to be the most striking proof of long descent. Her own instep, she was accustomed to boast, was so high that a little kitten could run underneath it.

A far more lifelike and picturesque portrait of Lady

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Hester than that by Lamartine has been sketched for us by Kinglake in his *Eothen*. In a charming passage which will be familiar to most readers, he relates how the name of Lady Hester Stanhope was as delightful to his childish ears as that of Robinson Crusoe. Chief among the excitements of his early days were the letters and presents of the Queen of the Desert, who as a girl had been much with her grandmother, Lady Chatham, at Burton Pynsent, and there had made the acquaintance of Miss Woodforde of Taunton, afterwards Mrs. Kinglake. The tradition of her high spirit and fine horsemanship still lingered in Somersetshire memories, but Kinglake had heard nothing of her for many years, when, on arriving at Beyrout in 1835, he found that her name was in every mouth. Anxious to see this romantic vision of his childhood, he wrote to Lady Hester, and asked if she would receive his mother's son. A few days later, in response to a gracious letter of invitation, Kinglake made his pilgrimage to Jôon.

The house at this time, after the storm and stress of the Egyptian invasion, had the appearance of a deserted fortress, and fierce-looking Albanian soldiers were hanging about the gates. Kinglake was conducted to an inner apartment where, in the dim light, he perceived an Oriental figure, clad in masculine costume, which advanced to meet him with many and profound bows. The visitor began a polite speech which he had prepared for his hostess, but presently discovered that the stranger was only her Italian attendant, Lunardi, who had conferred on himself a medical title and degree. Lady Hester had given orders that her guest should rest and dine before being introduced to her, and he

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tells us that, in spite of the homeliness of her domestic arrangements, he found both the wine and the cuisine very good. After dinner he was ushered into the presence of his hostess, who welcomed him cordially, and had exactly the appearance of a prophetess, 'not the divine Sibyl of Domenichino, but a good, business-like, practical prophetess.' Her face was of astonishing whiteness, her dress a mass of white linen loosely folded round her like a surplice. As he gazed upon her, he recalled the stories that he had heard of her early days, of the capable manner in which she had arranged the political banquets and receptions of Pitt, and the awe with which the Tory country gentlemen had regarded her. That awe had been transferred to the sheikhs and pashas of the East, but now that, with age and poverty, her earthly power was fading away, she had created for herself a spiritual kingdom.

After a few inquiries about her Somersetshire friends, the prophetess soared into loftier spheres, and discoursed of astrology and other occult sciences. 'For hours and hours this wonderful white woman poured forth her speech, for the most part concerning sacred and profane mysteries.' From time to time she would swoop down to worldly topics, 'and then,' as her auditor frankly observes, 'I was interested.' She described her life in the Arab camps, and explained that her influence over the tribes was partly due to her long sight, a quality held in high esteem in the desert, and partly to a brusque, downright manner, which is always effective with Orientals. She professed to have fasted physically and mentally for years, living only on milk, and reading neither books nor newspapers. Her unholy

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claim to supremacy in the spiritual kingdom was based, in Kinglake's opinion, on her fierce, inordinate pride, perilously akin to madness, though her mind was too strong to be entirely overcome. As a proof of Lady Hester's high courage, he notes the fact that, after the fall of Acre, her house was the only spot in Syria and Palestine where the will of Mehemet Ali and his fierce lieutenant was not law. Ibrahim Pasha had demanded that the Albanian soldiers should be given up, and their protectress had challenged him to come and take them. This hillock of Dar Jôon always kept its freedom as long as Chatham's granddaughter lived, and Mehemet Ali confessed that the Englishwoman had given him more trouble than all the insurgents of Syria. Kinglake did not see the famous sacred mares, but before his departure he was shown the gardens by the Italian secretary, who was in great distress of mind because he could not bring himself to believe implicitly in his employer's divine attributes. He said that Lady Hester was regarded with mingled respect and dislike by the neighbours, whom she oppressed by her exactions. The few 'respected' inhabitants of Mount Lebanon apparently claimed the right to avail themselves of their neighbours' goods; and the White Queen's establishment was supported by contributions from the surrounding villages. This is quite a different account from that given by Dr. Meryon, who always represents Lady Hester as a generous benefactress, admired and adored in all the country-side.

In 1836 Lady Hester discovered another mare's nest in the shape of a legacy which she chose to believe was being kept from her by her enemies. In August of this year she wrote to Dr. Meryon, who was then



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living at Nice, and invited him to come and assist her in settling her debts, and getting possession of this supposititious property. ‘A woman of high rank and good fortune,’ she continues, ‘who has built herself a *palais* in a remote part of America, has announced her intention of passing the rest of her life with me, so much has she been struck with my situation and conduct.<sup>1</sup> She is nearly of my age, and thirty-seven years ago—I being personally unknown to her—was so taken with my general appearance, that she never could divest herself of the thoughts of me, which have ever since pursued her. At last, informed by M. Lamartine’s book where I was to be found, she took this extraordinary determination, and in the spring I expect her. She is now selling her large landed estate, preparatory to her coming. She, as well as Leila the mare, is in the prophecy. The beautiful boy has also written, and is wandering over the face of the globe till destiny marks the period of our meeting. . . . I am reckoned here the first politician in the world, and by some a sort of prophet. Even the Emir wonders, and is astonished, for he was not aware of this extraordinary gift; but yet all say—I mean enemies—that I am worse than a lion when in a passion, and that they cannot deny I have justice on my side.’

After his former experience of Lady Hester’s hospitality it is surprising that the doctor should have been willing to accept this invitation, and still more surprising that his wife should have consented to accompany him to Syria. But the East was still ‘a-calling,’ and the almost hypnotic influence which her ladyship exercised

<sup>1</sup> This was the Baroness de Fériat, who did not carry out her intention.

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over her dependants seems to have lost none of its efficacy. Accordingly, as soon as the Meryons could arrange their affairs, they embarked at Marseilles, landing at Beyrout on July 1, 1837. Here the doctor received a letter from Lady Hester, recommending him to leave his family at Beyrout till he could find a house for them at Sayda. 'For your sake,' she continued, 'I should ever wish to show civility to all who belong to you, but caprice I will never interfere with, for from my early youth I have been taught to despise it.' Here was signal proof that the past had not been forgotten, and that war was still to be waged against the unfortunate Mrs. Meryon. In defiance of Lady Hester's orders, the whole family proceeded to Sayda, whence Dr. Meryon rode over to Dar Jôn. He received a warm personal welcome, but his hostess persisted in her statement that there was no house in the village fit for the reception of his womenkind, as nearly all had been damaged by recent earthquakes. It was finally arranged that Mrs. Meryon and her children should go for the present to Mar Elias, which was then only occupied by the Prophet Loustaunau.

At this time Lady Hester's financial affairs were becoming desperate, and she had even been reduced to selling some of her handsome pelisses. Yet she still maintained between thirty and forty servants, and when it was suggested to her that she might reduce her establishment, she was accustomed to reply, 'But my rank!' Her live-stock included the two sacred mares, three 'amblers,' five asses, a flock of sheep, and a few cows. A herd of a hundred goats had recently been slaughtered in one day, because their owner fancied that she was being cheated by her goatherd. Now she decided to

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have the three 'amblers' shot, because the grooms treated them improperly. The under-bailiff received orders to whisper into the ear of each horse before his execution, 'You have worked enough upon the earth; your mistress fears you might fall, in your old age, into the hands of cruel men, and she therefore dismisses you from her service.' This order was carried out to the letter, with imperturbable gravity.

After a short experience of the inconvenience of riding to and fro between Jôon and Mar Elias, Dr. Meryon persuaded his employer to allow him to bring his family to a cottage in the village; but the nearer the time approached for their arrival, the more she seemed to regret having assented to the arrangement. Frequent and scathing were her lectures upon the exigent ways of women, who, she argued, should be simple automata, moved only by the will and guidance of their masters. She lost no opportunity of throwing ridicule on Dr. Meryon's desire to have his family near him, in order that he might pass his evenings with them, pointing out that 'all sensible men take their meals with their wives, and then retire to their own rooms to read, write, or do what best pleases them. Nobody is such a fool as to moider away his time in the slipslop conversation of a pack of women.' Petty jealousies, quite inconsistent with her boasted philosophy, were perpetually tormenting her. One of the many monopolies claimed by her was that of the privilege of bell-ringing. The Mahometans, as is well known, never use bells in private houses, the usual summons for servants being three claps of the hands. But Lady Hester was a constant and vehement bell-ringer, and as no one else in the country-side possessed house-bells, it was generally

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believed that the use of them was a special privilege granted her by the Porte. She was therefore secretly much annoyed when the Meryons presumed to hang up bells in their new home. She made no sign of displeasure, but one morning it was discovered that the ropes had been cut and the bells carried off. Cross-examination of the servants elicited the fact that one of Lady Hester's emissaries had arrived late at night, wrenched off the bells, and taken them away. Some weeks later the Lady of Jôn confessed that she had instigated the act, and declared that if the Meryons' bells had hung much longer her own would not have been attended to.

Soon after the doctor's arrival, Lady Hester had dictated a letter to Sir Francis Burdett, in whom she placed great confidence, informing him of the property that she believed was being withheld from her, and requesting him to make inquiries into the matter. When not engaged in correspondence, discussing her debts, and scolding her servants, she was pouring out floods of conversation, chiefly reminiscences of her youth and diatribes against the men and manners of the present day, into the ears of the long-suffering doctor. 'From her manner towards other people,' he observes, 'it would have seemed that she was the only person in creation privileged to abuse and to command; others had nothing to do but to obey. She was haughty and overbearing, born to rule, impatient of control, and more at her ease when she had a hundred persons to govern than when she had only ten. Had she been a man and a soldier, she would have been what the French call a *beau sabreur*, for never was any one so fond of wielding weapons, and boasting of her capacity for using them, as she was. In

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her bedroom she always had a mace, which was spiked round the head, a steel battle-axe, and a dagger, but her favourite weapon was the mace.' Absurd as it may sound, it was probably her military vanity that led her to belittle the Duke of Wellington, of whose reputation she seems to have felt some personal jealousy. Yet she bears testimony to the esteem in which 'Arthur Wellesley' was held by William Pitt.

'I recollect, one day,' she told the doctor, 'Mr. Pitt came into the drawing-room to me, and said, "Oh, how I have been bored by Sir Sydney Smith coming with his box full of papers, and keeping me for a couple of hours, when I had so much to do." I observed to him that heroes were generally vain, and that Lord Nelson was so. "So he is," replied Mr. Pitt, "but not like Sir Sydney. And how different is Arthur Wellesley, who has just quitted me! He has given me such clear details upon affairs in India; and he talked of them, too, as if he had been a surgeon of a regiment, and had nothing to do with them; so that I know not which to admire most, his modesty or his talents, and yet the fate of India depends upon them." Then, doctor, when I recollect the letter he wrote to Edward Bouverie, in which he said he could not come down to a ball because his only corbeau coat was so bad he was ashamed to appear in it, I reflect what a rise he has had in the world. He was at first nothing but what hundreds of others are in a country town—he danced hard and drank hard. His star has done everything for him, for he is not a great general. He is no tactician, nor has he any of those great qualities that make a Cæsar, a Pompey, or even a Bonaparte. As for the battle of Waterloo, both French and English have told me that it was a

lucky battle for him, but nothing more. I don't think he acted well at Paris, nor did the soldiers like him.'

About the end of October Lady Hester took to her bed, and did not leave it till the following March. She had suffered from pulmonary catarrh for several years, which disappeared in the summer, but returned every winter with increased violence. Her practice of frequent bleeding had brought on a state of complete emaciation, and left very little blood in her body. If she had lived like other people, and trusted to the balmy air of Syria, Dr. Meryon was of opinion that nothing serious need have been apprehended from her illness. But she seldom breathed the outer air, and took no exercise except an occasional turn in the garden. She was always complaining that she could get nothing to eat; yet, in spite of her profession (to Kinglake) that she lived entirely on milk, we are told that her diet consisted of forcemeat balls, meat-pies, and other heavy viands, and that she seldom remained half an hour without taking nourishment of some kind. 'I never knew a human being who took nourishment so frequently,' writes Dr. Meryon, 'and may not this in some measure account for her frequent ill-humour?'

During her illness the doctor read aloud Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's *Memoirs* and the *Memoirs of a Peeress*, edited by Lady Charlotte Bury, both of which books dealt with persons whom Lady Hester had known in her youth. In return she regaled him with stories of her own glory, of Mr. Pitt's virtues, of the objectionable habits of the Princess of Wales, and of the meanness of the Regent in inviting himself to dinner with gentlemen who could not afford to entertain him, the whole pleasantly flavoured by animadversions on the social presumption of medical

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men, and descriptions of the methods by which formerly they were kept in their proper place by aristocratic patients. At this time, the beginning of 1838, Lady Hester was anxiously expecting an answer from Sir Francis Burdett about her property, and, hearing from the English consul at Sayda that a packet had arrived for her from Beyrout, which was to be delivered into her own hands, her sanguine mind was filled with the hope of coming prosperity. But when the packet was opened, instead of the long-expected missive from Sir Francis, it proved to be an official statement from Colonel Campbell, Consul-General for Egypt, that in consequence of an application made to the British Government by one of Lady Hester's chief creditors, an order had come from Lord Palmerston that her pension was to be stopped unless the debt was paid. When she read the letter Dr. Meryon feared an outburst of fury, but Lady Hester, who, for once, was beyond violence, began calmly to discuss the enormity of the conduct both of Queen and Minister.

‘My grandfather and Mr. Pitt,’ she said, ‘did something to keep the Brunswick family on the throne, and yet the granddaughter of the old king, without hearing the circumstances of my getting into debt, or whether the story is true, sends to deprive me of my pension in a strange land, where I may remain and starve. . . . I should like to ask for a public inquiry into my debts, and for what I have contracted them. Let them compare the good I have done in the cause of humanity and science with the Duke of Kent's debts. I wonder if Lord Palmerston is the man I recollect—a young man from college, who was always hanging about waiting to be introduced to Mr. Pitt. Mr. Pitt used to say, “Ah,

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very well; we will ask him to dinner some day." Perhaps it is an old grudge that makes him vent his spite.' Colonel Campbell's letter had given the poor lady's heart, or rather her pride, a fatal stab, and the indignity with which she had been treated preyed upon her health and spirits. She now determined to send an ultimatum to the Queen, which was to be published in the newspapers if ministers refused to lay it before her Majesty. This document, which was dated February 12, 1838, ran as follows :—

‘Your Majesty will allow me to say that few things are more disgraceful and inimical to royalty than giving commands without examining all their different bearings, and casting, without reason, an aspersion upon the integrity of any branch of a family that had faithfully served their country and the House of Hanover. As no inquiries have been made of me of what circumstances induced me to incur the debts alluded to, I deem it unnecessary to enter into any details on the subject. I shall not allow the pension given by your royal grandfather to be stopped by force; but I shall resign it for the payment of my debts, and with it the name of British subject, and the slavery that is at present annexed to it; and as your Majesty has given publicity to the business by your orders to your consular agents, I surely cannot be blamed for following your royal example.

‘HESTER LUCY STANHOPE.’

This was accompanied by a long letter to the Duke of Wellington, in which Lady Hester detailed her services in the East, and expressed her indignation at the treatment she had received. She was now left with only a few pounds upon which to maintain her house-



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hold until March, when she could draw for £300, apparently the quarter's income from a legacy left her by her brother, but of this sum £200 was due to a Greek merchant at Beyrout. The faithful doctor collected all the money he had in his house, about eleven pounds, and brought it to her for her current expenses, but with her usual impracticability she gave most of it away in charity. Still no letter came from Sir Francis Burdett, and the unfortunate lady, old, sick, and wasted to a skeleton, lay on her sofa and lamented over her troubles in a fierce, inhuman fashion, like a wounded animal at bay. In the course of time a reply came from Lord Palmerston, in which he stated that he had laid Lady Hester's letter before the Queen, and explained to her Majesty the circumstances that might be supposed to have led to her writing it. The communications to which she referred were, he continued, suggested by nothing but a desire to save her from the embarrassments that might arise if her creditors were to call upon the Consul-General to act according to the strict line of his duty. This letter did nothing towards assuaging Lady Hester's wrath. In her reply she sarcastically observed:—

‘If your diplomatic despatches are all as obscure as the one that now lies before me, it is no wonder that England should cease to have that proud preponderance in her foreign relations which she once could boast of. . . . It is but fair to make your lordship aware that, if by the next packet there is nothing definitely settled respecting my affairs, and I am not cleared in the eyes of the world of aspersions, intentionally or unintentionally thrown upon me, I shall break up my household, and build up the entrance-gate to my premises; there

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remaining as if I was in a tomb till my character has been done justice to, and a public acknowledgment put in the papers, signed and sealed by those who have aspersed me. There is no trifling with those who have Pitt blood in their veins upon the subject of integrity, nor expecting that their spirit would ever yield to the impertinent interference of consular authority, etc., etc.' It must be owned that there is a touch of unconscious humour in Lady Hester's terrible threat of walling herself up, a proceeding which would only make herself uncomfortable and leave her enemies at peace.

For the present matters went on much as usual at Dar Joon. No household expenses were curtailed, and thirty native servants continued to cheat their mistress and idle over their work. In March, that perambulating princeling, his Highness of Pückler-Muskau, arrived at Sayda, whence he wrote a letter to Lady Hester, begging to be allowed to pay his homage to the Queen of Palmyra and the niece of the great Pitt. 'I have the presumption to believe, madam,' he continued, 'that there must be some affinity of character between us. For, like you, my lady, I look for our future salvation from the East, where nations still nearer to God and to nature can alone, some day, purify the rotten civilisation of decrepid Europe, in which everything is artificial, and where we are menaced with a new kind of barbarism—not that with which states begin, but with which they end. Like you, madam, I believe that astrology is not an empty science, but a lost one. Like you, I am an aristocrat by birth and by principle; because I find a marked aristocracy in nature. In a word, madam, like you, I love to sleep by day and be stirring by night. There I stop; for in mind, energy of

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character, and in the mode of life, so singular and so dignified, which you lead, not every one who would can resemble Lady Hester Stanhope.'

Lady Hester was flattered by this letter, and told the doctor that he must ride into Sayda to see the prince, and tell him that she was too ill to receive him at present, but would endeavour to do so a few weeks later. The prince was established with his numerous suite in the house of a merchant of Sayda. Mehemet Ali had given him a special firman, requiring all official persons to treat him in a manner suitable to his rank, his whole expenditure being defrayed by cheques on the Viceroy's treasury. The prince, unlike most other distinguished travellers who were treated with the same honour, took the firman strictly according to the letter, and could boast of having traversed the whole of Egypt and Syria with all the pomp of royalty, and without having expended a single farthing. Dr. Meryon describes his Highness as a tall man of about fifty years of age, distinguished by an unmistakable air of birth and breeding. He wore a curious mixture of Eastern and Western costume, and had a tame chameleon crawling about his pipe, with which he was almost as much occupied as M. Lamartine with his lapdog. The prince stated that he had almost made up his mind to settle in the East, since Europe was no longer the land of liberty. 'I will build myself a house,' he said, 'get what I want from Europe, make arrangements for newspapers, books, etc., and choose some delightful situation; but I think it will be on Mount Lebanon.'

In his volume of travels in the East called *Die Rückkehr*, Prince Pückler-Muksau has given an amusing

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account of the negotiations that passed between himself and Lady Hester on the subject of his visit. For once the niece of Pitt had found her match in vanity and arrogance; and if the prince's book had appeared in her lifetime, it is certain that she would not long have survived it. His Highness describes how he bided his time, as though he were laying siege to a courted beauty, and almost daily bombarded the Lady of Jôon with letters calculated to pique her curiosity by their frank and original style. At last, 'in order to be rid of him,' as she jokingly said, Lady Hester consented to receive him on a certain day, which, from his star, she deemed propitious to their meeting. Thereupon the prince, who intended that his visit should be desired, not suffered, wrote to say that he was setting out for an expedition into the desert, but that on his return he would come to Jôon, not for one day, but for a week. This impertinence was rewarded by permission to come at his own time.

Great preparations were made for the entertainment of this distinguished visitor. The scanty contents of the store and china cupboards were spread out before the lady of the house, who infused activity into the most sluggish by smart strokes from her stick. The epithets of beast, rascal, and the like, were dealt out with such freedom and readiness, as to make the European part of her audience sensible of the richness and variety of the Arabian language. On Easter Monday, April 15, the prince, followed by a part of his suite, and five mule-loads of baggage, rode into the courtyard. He wore an immense Leghorn hat lined with green taffetas, a Turkish scarf over his shoulders, and blue pantaloons of ample dimensions.

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From the excellent fit of his Parisian boots, it was evident that he felt his pretensions to a thoroughbred foot were now to be magisterially decided. The prince has given his own impression of his hostess, whom he describes as a thorough woman of the world, with manners of Oriental dignity and calm. With her pale, regular features, dark, fiery eyes, great height, and sonorous voice, she had the appearance of an ancient Sibyl; yet no one, he declares, could have been more natural and unaffected in manner. She told him that since she had lost her money, she had lived like a dervish, and assimilated herself to the ways of nature. ‘My roses are my jewels,’ she said, ‘the sun and moon my clocks, fruit and water my food and drink. I see in your face that you are a thorough epicure; how will you endure to spend a week with me?’ The prince, who had already dined, replied that he found she did not keep her guests on fruit and water, and assured her that English poverty was equivalent to German riches. He spent six or seven hours *tête-à-tête* with his hostess each evening of his stay, and declares that he was astonished at the originality and variety of her conversation. He had the audacity to ask her if the Arab chief who accompanied her to Palmyra had been her lover, but she, not ill-pleased, assured him that there was no truth in the report, which at one time had been generally believed. She said that the Arabs regarded her neither as man or woman, but as a being apart.

Before leaving, the prince introduced his ‘harem,’ consisting of two Abyssinian slaves, to Lady Hester, and was presented, in his turn, to the sacred mares, which had lost their beauty, and grown gross and

unwieldy under their *régime* of gentle exercise and unlimited food. Leila licked the prince's hand when he caressed her, and Leila's mistress was thereby convinced that her guest was a 'chosen vessel.' She confided to him all her woes, the neglect of her relations and the ill-treatment of the Government, and gave him copies of the correspondence about her pension, which he promised to publish in a German newspaper. To Dr. Meryon she waxed quite enthusiastic over his Highness's personal attractions, the excellent cut of his coat, and the handiness with which he performed small services. 'I could observe,' writes the doctor, towards the end of the visit, 'that she had already begun to obtain an ascendancy over the prince, such as she never failed to do over those who came within the sphere of her attraction; for he was less lofty in his manner than he had been at first, and she seemed to have gained in height, and to be more disposed to play the queen than ever.'

This, alas, was the last time that Lady Hester had the opportunity of playing the queen, or entertaining a distinguished guest at Dar Jôn. In June, when the packet brought no news of her imaginary property, and no apology from Queen or Premier, she began at last to despair. 'The die is cast,' she told Dr. Meryon, 'and the sooner you take yourself off the better. I have no money; you can be of no use to me—I shall write no more letters, and shall break up my establishment, wall up my gate, and, with a boy and girl to wait upon me, resign myself to my fate. Tell your family they may make their preparations, and be gone in a month's time.' Early in July Sir Francis Burdett's long-expected letter arrived, but brought with it no

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consolation. He could tell nothing of the legacy, but wrote in the soothing, evasive terms that might be supposed suitable to an elderly lady who was not quite accountable for her ideas or actions. As there was now no hope of any improvement in her affairs, Lady Hester decided to execute her threat of walling up her gateway, a proceeding which, she was unable to perceive, injured nobody but herself. She directed the doctor to pay and dismiss her servants, with the exception of two maids and two men, and then sent him to Beyrout to inform the French consul of her intention. On his return to Jôn he found that Lady Hester had already hired a vessel to take himself and his family from Sayda to Cyprus. He was reluctant to leave her in solitude and wretchedness, but knowing that when once her mind was made up, nothing could shake her resolution, he employed the time that remained to him in writing her letters, setting her house in order, and taking her instructions for commissions in Europe. He also begged to be allowed to lend her as much money as he could spare, and she consented to borrow a sum of 2000 piastres (about £80), which she afterwards repaid.

On July 30, 1838, the masons arrived, and the entrance-gate was walled up with a kind of stone screen, leaving, however, a side-opening just large enough for an ass or cow to enter, so that this much-talked-of act of self-immurement was more an appearance than a reality. On August 6, the faithful doctor took an affectionate leave of the employer, who, as Prince Pückler-Muskau bears witness, was accustomed to treat him with icy coldness, and sailed for western climes. To the last, he tells us, Lady Hester dwelt with apparent

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confidence on the approaching advent of the Mahedi, and still regarded her mare Leila as destined to bear him into Jerusalem, with herself upon Lulu at his side. It is to be hoped that the poor lady was able to buoy herself up with this belief during the last and most solitary year of her disappointed life. About once a month, up to the date of her death, she corresponded with Dr. Meryon, who was again settled at Nice. Her letters were chiefly taken up with commissions, and with shrewd comments upon the new books that were sent out to her.

‘I should like to have Miss Pardoe’s book on Constantinople,’ she writes in October, 1838, ‘if it is come out for strangers (*i.e.* in a French translation); for I fear I should never get through with it myself. This just puts me in mind that one of the books I should like to have would be Graham’s *Domestic Medicine*; a good Red Book (*Peerage*, I mean); and the book about the Prince of Wales. I have found out a person who can occasionally read French to me; so if there was any very pleasing French book, you might send it—but no Bonapartes or “present times”—and a little *brochure* or two upon baking, pastry, gardening, etc. . . .

‘Feb. 9, 1839.—The book you sent me (*Diary of the Times of George IV.*, by Lady Charlotte Bury) is interesting only to those who were acquainted with the persons named: all mock taste, mock feeling, etc., but that is the fashion. “I am this, I am that”; who ever talked such empty stuff formerly? *I* was never named by a well-bred person. . . . Miss Pardoe is very excellent upon many subjects; only there is too much of what the English like—stars, winds, black shades, soft sounds, etc. . . .



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‘*May 6.*—Some one—I suppose you—sent me the *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*. It is *I* who could give a true and most extraordinary history of all those transactions. The book is all stuff. The duchess (Lord Edward’s mother) was my particular friend, as was also his aunt; I was intimate with all the family, and knew that noted Pamela. All the books I see make me sick—only catchpenny nonsense. A thousand thanks for the promise of my grandfather’s letters; but the book will be all spoilt by being edited by young men. First, they are totally ignorant of the politics of my grandfather’s age; secondly, of the style of the language used at that period; and absolutely ignorant of his secret reasons and intentions, and the *real* or apparent footing he was upon with many people, friends or foes. I know all that from my grandmother, who was his secretary, and, Coutts used to say, the cleverest *man* of her time in politics and business.’

This was the last letter that Dr. Meryon received from his old friend and patroness. She slowly wasted away, and died in June 1839, no one being aware of her approaching end except the servants about her. The news of her death reached Beyrout in a few hours, and the English consul, Mr. Moore, and an American missionary (Mr. Thomson, author of *The Land and the Book*) rode over to Jôon to bury her. By her own desire she was interred in a grave in her garden, where a son of the Prophet Loustaunau had been buried some years before. Mr. Thomson has described how he performed the last rites at midnight by the light of lanterns and torches, and notes the curious resemblance between Lady Hester’s funeral service and that of the man she loved, Sir John Moore. Together with the consul, he examined

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the contents of thirty-five rooms, but found nothing but old saddles, pipes, and empty oil-jars, everything of value having been long since plundered by the servants. The sacred mares, now grown old and almost useless, were sold for a small sum by public auction, and only survived for a short time their return to an active life.

In 1845 Dr. Meryon published his so-called *Memoirs of Lady Hester Stanhope*, which are merely an account of her later years, and a report of her table-talk at Dar Jôn. In 1846 he brought out her *Travels*, which were advertised as the supplement and completion of the *Memoirs*. From these works, and from passing notices of our heroine, we gain a general impression of wasted talents and a disappointed life. That she was more unhappy in her solitude than, in her unbending nature, she would avow, observes her faithful friend and chronicler, the record of the last years of her existence too plainly demonstrates. Although she derived consolation in retirement from the retrospect of the part she had played in her prosperity, still there were moments of poignant grief when her very soul groaned within her. She was ambitious, and her ambition had been foiled; she loved irresponsible command, but the time had come when those over whom she ruled defied her; she was dictatorial and exacting, but she had lost the influence which alone makes people tolerate control. She incurred debts, and was doomed to feel the degradation consequent upon them. She thought to defy her own nation, and they hurled the defiance back upon her. She entertained visionary projects of aggrandisement, and was met by the derision of the world. In a word, Lady Hester died as she had lived, alone and miserable

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in a strange land, bankrupt in affection and credit, because, in spite of her great gifts and innate benevolence, her overbearing temper had alienated friends and kinsfolk alike, and her pride could endure neither the society of equals, nor the restraints and conventions of civilised life.

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ENGLAND**







*Art. Dupont.*

*Prince Pückler-Muskau*







# PRINCE PÜCKLER-MUSKAU IN ENGLAND

## PART I

DURING the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century there was no more original and picturesque figure among the minor celebrities of Germany—one might almost say of Europe—than that of his Highness, Hermann Ludwig Heinrich, Prince Pückler-Muskau. Throughout his long career we find this princeling playing many parts—at once an imitation Werter, a sentimental Don Juan, a dandy who out-dressed D'Orsay, a sportsman and traveller of Münchhausen type, a fashionable author who wrote German with a French accent and a warrior who seems to have wandered out of the pages of mediæval romance. Yet with all his mock-heroic notoriety, the *toller Pückler* was by no means destitute of those practical qualities which tempered the Teutonic Romanticism, even in its earliest and most extravagant developments. He was skilled in all manly exercises, a brave soldier, an intelligent observer, and—his most substantial claim to remembrance—the father of landscape-gardening in Germany, a veritable magician who transformed level wastes into wooded landscapes and made the sandy wildernesses blossom like the rose.

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To English readers the prince's name was once familiar as the author of *Briefe eines Verstorbenen* (Letters of a Dead Man), which contain a lively account of his Highness' sojourn in England and Ireland between the years 1826 and 1828. These letters, which were translated into English under the title of *The Tour of a German Prince*, made a sensation, favourable and otherwise, in the early 'thirties,' owing to the candid fashion in which they dealt with our customs and our countrymen. The book received the high honour of a complimentary review from the pen of the aged Goethe. 'The writer appears to be a perfect and experienced man of the world,' observes this distinguished critic; 'endowed with talents and a quick apprehension; formed by a varied social existence, by travel and extensive connections. His journey was undertaken very recently, and brings us the latest intelligence from the countries which he has viewed with an acute, clear, and comprehensive eye. We see before us a finely-constituted being, born to great external advantages and felicities, but in whom a lively spirit of enterprise is not united to constancy and perseverance; whence he experiences frequent failure and disappointment. . . . The peculiarities of English manners and habits are drawn vividly and distinctly, and without exaggeration. We acquire a lively idea of that wonderful combination, that luxuriant growth—of that insular life which is based in boundless wealth and civil freedom, in universal monotony and manifold diversity; formal and capricious, active and torpid, energetic and dull, comfortable and tedious, the envy and derision of the world. Like other unprejudiced travellers of modern times, our author is not very much enchanted with the

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English form of existence: his cordial and sincere admiration is often accompanied by unsparing censure. He is by no means inclined to favour the faults and weaknesses of the English; and in this he has the greatest and best among themselves upon his side.'

As these Letters were not written until the prince had passed his fortieth year, it will be necessary, before considering them in detail, to give a brief sketch of his previous career. Hermann Ludwig was the only son of Graf von Pückler of Schloss Branitz, and of his wife, Clementine, born a Gräfin von Gallenberg, and heiress to the vast estate of Muskau in Silesia. Both families were of immense antiquity, the Pücklers claiming to trace their descent from Rüdiger von Bechlarn, who figures in the *Nibelungenlied*. Our hero was born at Muskau in October 1785, and spent, according to his own account, a wretched and neglected childhood. His father was harsh, miserly, and suspicious; his mother, who was only fifteen when her son was born, is described as a frivolous little flirt. The couple, after perpetually quarrelling for ten or twelve years, were divorced, by mutual consent, in 1797, and the Gräfin shortly afterwards married one of her numerous admirers, Graf von Seydewitz, with whom she lived as unhappily as with her first husband. Her little son was educated at a Moravian school, and in the holidays was left entirely to the care of the servants. After a couple of years at the university of Leipzig, he entered the Saxon army, and soon became notorious for his good looks, his fine horsemanship, his extravagance, and his mischievous pranks. Military discipline in time of peace proved too burdensome for the young lieutenant, who, after quarrelling with his father, getting deeply

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into debt, and embroiling himself with the authorities, threw up his commission in 1804. Muskau having become much too hot to hold him, he spent the next years in travelling about the Continent, always in pecuniary difficulties, and seldom free from some sentimental entanglement.

In 1810 Graf Pückler died, and his son stepped into a splendid inheritance. Like Prince Hal, the young Graf seems to have taken his new responsibilities seriously, and to have devoted himself, with only too much enthusiasm, to the development and improvement of his estates. In the intervals of business he amused himself with an endless series of love-affairs, his achievements in this respect, if his biographer may be believed, more than equalling those of Jupiter and Don Giovanni put together. Old and young, pretty and plain, noble and humble, native and foreign, all were fish that came to the net of this lady-killer, who not only vowed allegiance to nearly every petticoat that crossed his path, but—a much more remarkable feat—kept up an impassioned correspondence with a large selection of his charmers. After his death, a whole library of love-letters was discovered among his papers, all breathing forth adoration, ecstasy or despair, and addressed to the Julies, Jeannettes, or Amalies who succeeded one another so rapidly in his facile affections. These documents, for the most part carefully-corrected drafts of the originals, were indorsed, ‘Old love-letters, to be used again if required!’

In 1813 the trumpet of war sounded the call to arms, and the young Graf entered the military service of Prussia, and was appointed aide-de-camp to the Duke of Saxe-Weimar. He distinguished himself in the Nether-

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lands, was present at the taking of Cassel, and in the course of the campaign played a part in a new species of duel. A French colonel of Hussars, so the story goes, rode out of the enemy's lines, and challenged any officer in the opposing army to single combat. Pückler accepted the challenge, and the duel was fought on horseback—presumably with sabres—between the ranks of the two armies, the soldiers on either side applauding their chosen champion. At length, after a fierce struggle, Germany triumphed, and the brave Frenchman bit the dust. Whether the tale be true or apocryphal, it is certain that numerous decorations were conferred upon the young officer for his brilliant services, that he was promoted to the rank of colonel, and appointed civil and military governor of Brüges. Pückler took part in the triumphal entry of the Allies into Paris, and afterwards accompanied the Duke of Saxe-Weimar to London, where he shared in all the festivities of the wonderful season of 1815, studied the English methods of landscape-gardening, and made an unsuccessful attempt to marry a lady of rank and fortune.

After his return to Muskau the Graf continued his work on his estate, which, in spite of a sandy soil and other disadvantages, soon became one of the show-places of Germany. Having discovered a spring of mineral water, he built a pump-room, a theatre, and a gaming-saloon, and named the establishment Hermannsbad. The invalids who frequented the Baths must have enjoyed a lively 'cure,' for besides theatrical performances, illuminations, fireworks and steeplechases, the Graf was always ready to oblige with some sensational achievement. On one occasion he leapt his horse over the parapet of a bridge into the river, and swam triumphantly

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ashore; while on another he galloped up the steps of the Casino, played and won a *coup* at the tables without dismounting, and then galloped down again, arriving at the bottom with a whole neck, but considerable damage to his horse's legs.

In 1816 Pückler became acquainted with Lucie, Gräfin von Pappenheim, a daughter of Prince Hardenberg, Chancellor of Prussia. The Gräfin, a well-preserved woman of forty, having parted from her husband, was living at Berlin with her daughter, Adelheid, afterwards Princess Carolath, and her adopted daughter, Herminie Lanzendorf. The Graf divided his attentions equally between the three ladies for some time, but on inquiring of a friend which would make the greatest sensation in Berlin, his marriage to the mother or to one of the daughters, and being told his marriage to the mother, at once proposed to the middle-aged Gräfin, and was joyfully accepted. The reason for this inappropriate match probably lay deeper than the desire to astonish the people of Berlin, for Pückler, with all his surface romanticism, had a keen eye to the main chance. His Lucie had only a moderate dower, but the advantage of being son-in-law to the Chancellor of Prussia could hardly be overestimated. Again, the Graf seems to have imagined that in a marriage of convenience with a woman nine years older than himself, he would be able to preserve the liberty of his bachelor days, while presenting the appearance of domestic respectability.

As soon as the trifling formality of a divorce from Count Pappenheim had been gone through, the marriage took place at Muskau, to the accompaniment of the most splendid festivities. As may be supposed, the early married life of the ill-assorted couple was a period

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of anything but unbroken calm. Scarcely had the Graf surrendered his liberty than he fell passionately in love with his wife's adopted daughter, Helmine, a beautiful girl of eighteen, the child, it was believed, of humble parents. Frederick William III. of Prussia was one of her admirers, and had offered to marry her morganatically, and create her Herzogin von Breslau. But Helmine gave her royal suitor no encouragement, and he soon consoled himself with the Princess Liegnitz. Lucie spared no pains to marry off the inconvenient beauty, but Pückler frustrated all her efforts, implored her not to separate him from Helmine, and suggested an arrangement based upon the domestic policy of Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften*. But Lucie was unreasonable enough to object to a *ménage à trois*, and at length succeeded in marrying Helmine to a Lieutenant von Blucher.

In 1822 the Graf accompanied his father-in-law to the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, and shortly afterwards was raised to princely rank, in compensation for the losses he had sustained through the annexation of Silesia by Prussia. By this time the prince's financial affairs were in so desperate a condition, thanks to the follies of his youth and the building mania of his manhood, that a desperate remedy was required to put them straight again. Only one expedient presented itself, and this Lucie, with a woman's self-sacrifice, was the first to propose. During a short absence from Muskau she wrote to her husband to offer him his freedom, in order that he might be enabled to marry a rich heiress, whose fortune could be used to clear off the liabilities that pressed so heavily on the estate. The prince at first refused to take advantage of this



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generous offer. He had become accustomed to his elderly wife, who acted as his colleague and helper in all that concerned his idolised Muskau, and upon whose sympathy and advice he had learned to depend. But as time went on he grew accustomed to the idea of an amicable divorce, and at length persuaded himself that such a proceeding need make no real difference to Lucie's position; in fact, that it would be an advantage to her as well as to himself. For years past he had regarded her rather in the light of a maternal friend than of a wife, and the close *camaraderie* that existed between them would remain unbroken by the advent of a young bride whom Lucie would love as her own child. A divorce, it must be remembered, was a common incident of everyday life in the Germany of that epoch. As we have seen, Pückler's father and mother had dissolved their marriage, and Lucie had been divorced from her first husband, while her father had been married three times, and had separated from each of his wives.

The matter remained in abeyance for a year or two, and it was not until 1826, when the prince probably felt that he had no time to lose, that the long-talked-of divorce actually took place. This curious couple, who appeared to be more tenderly attached to each other now than they had ever been before, took a touching farewell in Berlin. The princess then returned to Muskau, where she remained during her ex-husband's absence as his agent and representative, while the prince set out for England, which country was supposed to offer the best hunting-ground for heiresses. Week by week during his tour, Pückler addressed to his faithful Lucie long, confidential letters,

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filled with observations of the manners and customs of the British barbarians, together with minute descriptions of his adventures in love and landscape-gardening.

The prince, though at this time in his forty-first year, was still, to all appearance, in the prime of life, still an adept in feats of skill and strength, and not less romantic and susceptible than in the days of his youth. With his high rank, his vast though encumbered estates, his picturesque appearance, and his wide experience in affairs of the heart, he anticipated little difficulty in carrying off one of the most eligible of British heiresses ; but he quite forgot to include the hard-hearted, level-headed British parent in his reckoning. The prince's first letter to Lucie, who figures in the published version as Julie, is dated Dresden, September 7, 1826, and begins in right Werterian strain :—

‘MY DEAR FRIEND,—The love you showed me at our parting made me so happy and so miserable that I cannot yet recover from it. Your sad image is ever before me ; I still read deep sorrow in your looks and in your tears, and my own heart tells me too well what yours suffered. May God grant us a meeting as joyful as our parting was sorrowful ! I can only repeat what I have so often told you, that if I felt myself without you, my dearest friend, in the world, I could enjoy none of its pleasures without an alloy of sadness ; that if you love me, you will above all things watch over your health, and amuse yourself as much as you can by varied occupation.’ There are protestations of this kind in nearly every letter, for the prince's pen was always tipped with fine sentiment and vows of eternal devotion came more easily to him than the ordinary civilities of everyday life to the average man.

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A visit to Goethe at Weimar, on the traveller's leisurely journey towards England, furnished his notebook with some interesting specimens of the old poet's conversation. 'He received me,' writes the prince, 'in a dimly-lighted room, whose *clair obscure* was arranged with some *coquetterie*; and truly the aspect of the beautiful old man, with his Jovelian countenance, was most stately. . . . In the course of conversation we came to Walter Scott. Goethe was not very enthusiastic about the Great Unknown. He said he doubted not that he wrote his novels in the same sort of partnership as existed between the old painters and their pupils; that he furnished the plot, the leading thoughts, the skeleton of the scenes, that he then let his pupils fill them up, and retouched them at the last. It seemed almost to be his opinion that it was not worth the while of a man of Scott's eminence to give himself up to such a number of minute and tedious details. "Had I," he said, "been able to lend myself to the idea of mere gain, I could formerly have sent such things anonymously into the world, with the aid of Lenz and others—nay, I could still, as would astonish people not a little, and make them puzzle their brains to find out the author; but after all, they would be but manufactured wares. . . ."

'He afterwards spoke of Lord Byron with great affection, almost as a father would of a son, which was extremely grateful to my enthusiastic feelings for this great poet. He contradicted the silly assertion that *Manfred* was only an echo of his *Faust*. He extremely regretted that he had never become personally acquainted with Lord Byron, and severely and justly reproached the English nation for having judged their illustrious

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countryman so pettily, and understood him so ill.' The conversation next turned on politics, and Goethe reverted to his favourite theory that if every man laboured faithfully, honestly, and lovingly in this sphere, were it great or small, universal well-being and happiness would not long be wanting, whatever the form of government. The prince urged in reply that a constitutional government was first necessary to call such a principle into life, and adduced the example of England in support of his argument. 'Goethe immediately replied that the choice of the example was not happy, for that in no country was selfishness more omnipotent; that no people were perhaps essentially less humane in their political or their private relations; that salvation came, not from without, by means of forms of government, but from within, by the wise moderation and humble activity of each man in his own circle; and that this must ever be the chief source of human felicity, while it was the easiest and the simplest to attain.'

The prince seems always to have played the part of Jonah on board ship, and on the occasion of his journey to England, he had a terrible passage of forty hours, from Rotterdam to the London Docks. As soon as he could get his carriage, horses, and luggage clear of the customs, he hastened to the Clarendon Hotel, where he had stayed during his first visit to London. Unlike the American, N. P. Willis, he had come armed with many prejudices against England and the English, few of which he succeeded in losing during the two years of his sojourn among us. In his first letter from London, dated October 5, 1826, he writes: 'London is now so utterly dead to elegance and fashion that one hardly meets a single equipage, and nothing remains of the

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*beau monde* but a few ambassadors. The huge city is at the same time full of fog and dirt, and the macadamised streets are like well-worn roads. The old pavement has been torn up, and replaced by small pieces of granite, the interstices between which are filled up with gravel; this renders the riding more easy, and diminishes the noise, but on the other hand changes the town into a sort of quagmire.' The prince comments favourably on the improvements that had recently been carried out by Nash the architect, more especially as regards Regent Street and Portland Place, and declares that the laying out of the Regent's Park is 'faultless,' particularly in the disposition of the water.

The comfort and luxury of English hotels, as well as of private houses, is a subject on which the traveller frequently enlarges, and in this first letter he assures his Lucie that she would be delighted with the extreme cleanliness of the interiors, the great convenience of the furniture, and the good manners of the serving-people, though he admits that, for all that pertains to luxury, the tourist pays about six times as much as in Germany. 'The comfort of the inns,' he continues, 'is unknown on the Continent; on your washing-table you find, not one miserable water-bottle with a single earthenware jug and basin, and a long strip of towel, but positive tubs of porcelain in which you may plunge half your body; taps which instantly supply you with streams of water at pleasure; half-a-dozen wide towels, a large standing mirror, foot-baths and other conveniences of the toilet, all of equal elegance.'

The prince took advantage of the dead season to explore the city and other unfashionable quarters of the town. He was delighted with the excellent side-

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pavements, the splendid shops, the brilliant gas-lamps, and above all (like Miss Edgeworth's Rosamund) with 'the great glass globes in the chemists' windows, filled with liquid of a deep red, blue or green, the light of which is visible for miles (!)' Visits to the Exchange, the Bank, and the Guildhall were followed by a call on Rothschild, 'the Grand Ally of the Grand Alliance,' at his house of business. 'On my presenting my card,' says our hero, 'he remarked ironically that we were lucky people who could afford to travel about, and take our pleasure, while he, poor man, had such a heavy burden to bear. He then broke out into bitter complaints that every poor devil who came to England had something to ask of him. . . . After this the conversation took a political turn, and we of course agreed that Europe could not subsist without him; he modestly declined our compliments, and said, smiling, 'Oh no, you are only jesting; I am but a servant, with whom people are pleased because he manages their affairs well, and to whom they allow some crumbs to fall as an acknowledgment.'

On October 19 the prince went to Newmarket for the races. During his stay he was introduced to a rich merchant of the neighbourhood, who invited him to spend a couple of days at his country-house. He gives Lucie a minute account of the manners and customs of an English *ménage*, but these are only interesting to the modern reader in so far as they have become obsolete. For example: 'When you enter the dining-room, you find the whole of the first course on the table, as in France. After the soup is removed, and the covers are taken off, every man helps the dish before him, and offers some to his neighbour; if he

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wishes for anything else, he must ask across the table, or send a servant for it, a very troublesome custom. . . . It is not usual to take wine without drinking to another person. If the company is small, and a man has drunk with everybody, but happens to wish for more wine, he must wait for the dessert, if he does not find in himself courage to brave custom.'

On his return to town the prince, who had been elected a member of the Travellers' Club, gives a long dissertation on English club life, not forgetting to dwell on the luxury of all the arrangements, the excellent service, and the methodical fashion in which the gaming-tables were conducted. 'In no other country,' he declares, 'are what are here emphatically called "business habits" carried so extensively into social and domestic life; the value of time, of order, of despatch, of routine, are nowhere so well understood. This is the great key to the most striking, national characteristics. The quantity of material objects produced and accomplished—the *work done*—in England exceeds all that man ever effected. The causes that have produced these results have as certainly given birth to the dulness, the contracted views, the inveterate prejudices, the unbounded desire for, and deference to wealth which characterise the great mass of Englishmen.'

During this first winter in London the prince was a regular attendant at the theatres, and many were the dramatic criticisms that he sent to his 'friend' at Muskau. He saw Liston in the hundred and second representation of *Paul Pry*, and at Drury Lane found, to his amazement that Braham, whom he remembered as an elderly man in 1814, was still first favourite. 'He is the genuine representative of the English style of

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singing,' writes our critic, 'and in popular songs is the adored idol of the public. One cannot deny him great power of voice and rapidity of execution, but a more abominable style it is difficult to conceive. . . . The most striking feature to a foreigner in English theatres is the natural coarseness and brutality of the audiences. The consequence is that the higher and more civilised classes go only to the Italian Opera, and very rarely visit their national theatre. English freedom has degenerated into the rudest licence, and it is not uncommon in the midst of the most affecting part of a tragedy, or the most charming cadenza of a singer, to hear some coarse expression shouted from the gallery in a stentor voice. This is followed, either by loud laughter and applause, or by the castigation and expulsion of the offender.'

The poor prince saw Mozart's *Figaro* announced for performance at Drury Lane, and looked forward to hearing once more the sweet harmonies of his Vaterland. 'What, then, was my astonishment,' he exclaims, in justifiable indignation, 'at the unheard-of treatment which the masterpiece of the immortal composer has received at English hands! You will hardly believe me when I tell you that neither the count, the countess, nor Figaro sang; these parts were given to mere actors, and their principal airs were sung by other singers. To add to this the gardener roared out some interpolated English popular songs, which suited Mozart's music just as a pitch-plaster would suit the face of the Venus de' Medici. The whole opera was, moreover, arranged by a certain Mr. Bishop; that is, adapted to English ears by means of the most tasteless and shocking alterations. The English national music, the coarse,



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heavy melodies of which can never be mistaken for an instant, has to me, at least, something singularly offensive, an expression of brutal feeling both in pain and pleasure that smacks of "roast-beef, plum-pudding, and porter."

Another entertainment attended by our hero about this time was the opening of Parliament by George IV., who had not performed this ceremony for several years. 'The king,' we are told, 'looked pale and bloated, and was obliged to sit on the throne for a considerable time before he could get breath enough to read his speech. During this time he turned friendly glances and condescending bows towards some favoured ladies. On his right stood Lord Liverpool, with the sword of state and the speech in his hand, and the Duke of Wellington on his left. All three looked so miserable, so ashy-grey and worn out, that never did human greatness appear to me so little worth. . . . In spite of his feebleness, George IV. read his *banale* speech with great dignity and a fine voice, but with that royal nonchalance which does not concern itself with what his Majesty promises, or whether he is sometimes unable to decipher a word. It was very evident that the monarch was heartily glad when the *corvée* was over.'

In one of his early letters the traveller gives his friend the following account of the manner in which he passes his day: 'I rise late, read three or four newspapers at breakfast, look in my visiting-book to see what visits I have to pay, and either drive to pay them in my cabriolet, or ride. In the course of these excursions, I sometimes catch the enjoyment of the picturesque; the struggle of the blood-red sun with the winter fogs often produces wild and singular effects of

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light. After my visits I ride for several hours about the beautiful environs of London, return when it grows dark, dress for dinner, which is at seven or eight, and spend the evening either at the theatre or some small party. The ludicrous routs—at which one hardly finds standing-room on the staircase—have not yet commenced. In England, however, except in a few diplomatic houses, you can go nowhere in the evening without a special invitation.’

The prince seems to have been bored at most of the parties he attended; partly, perhaps, out of pique at finding himself, so long accustomed to be the principal personage in his little kingdom of Muskau, eclipsed in influence and wealth by many a British commoner. Few persons that he met in the London of that day amused him more than the great Rothschild, with whom he dined more than once at the banker’s suburban villa. Of one of these entertainments he writes: ‘Mr. Rothschild was in high good-humour, amusing and talkative. It was diverting to hear him explain to us the pictures round his room (all portraits of the sovereigns of Europe, presented through their ambassadors), and talk of the originals as his very good friends, and in a certain sense his equals. “Yes,” said he, “the Prince of —— once pressed me for a loan, and in the same week on which I received his autograph letter, his father wrote to me also from Rome, to beg me, for Heaven’s sake, not to have any concern in it, for that I could not have to do with a more dishonest man than his son. . . .” He concluded by modestly calling himself the dutiful and generously-paid agent and servant of these high potentates, all of whom he honoured equally, let the state of politics be what it might; for, said he,

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laughing, "I never like to quarrel with my bread and butter." It shows great prudence in Mr. Rothschild to have accepted neither title nor order, and thus to have preserved a far more respectable independence. He doubtless owes much to the good advice of his extremely amiable and judicious wife, who excels him in tact and knowledge of the world, though not, perhaps, in acuteness and talents for business.'

Although the prince had not as yet entered the ranks of authors, he was always interested in meeting literary people, such as Mr. Hope, author of *Anastasius*, Mr. Morier of *Hadji Baba* fame, and Lady Charlotte Bury, who had exchanged the celebrity of a beauty for that of a fashionable novelist. 'I called on Lady Charlotte,' he says, 'the morning after meeting her, and found everything in her house brown, in every possible shade; furniture, curtains, carpets, her own and her children's dresses, presented no other colour. The room was without looking-glasses or pictures, and its only ornaments were casts from the antique. . . . After I had been there some time, the celebrated publisher, Constable, entered. This man has made a fortune by Walter Scott's novels, though, as I was told, he refused his first and best, *Waverley*, and at last gave but a small sum for it. I hope the charming Lady Charlotte had better cause to be satisfied with him.'

Towards the end of December, his Highness's head-gardener, Rehde, a very important functionary at Muskau, arrived in London to be initiated into the mysteries of English landscape-gardening. Together the two enthusiasts, master and man, made a tour of some of the principal show-places of England, including Stanmore Priory, Woburn Abbey, Cashiobury, Blenheim,

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Stowe, Eaton, Warwick, and Kenilworth, besides many of lesser note. At the end of the excursion, which lasted three weeks, the prince declared that even he was beginning to feel satiated with the charms of English parks. On his return to London he was invited to spend a few days with Lord Darnley at Cobham, and writes thence some further impressions of English country-house life. He was a little perturbed at being publicly reminded by his elderly host that they had made each other's acquaintance thirty years before.

'Now, as I was in frocks at the time he spoke of,' observes the prince, 'I was obliged to beg for a further explanation, though I cannot say I was much delighted at having my age so fully discussed before all the company, for you know I claim to look not more than thirty. However, I could not but admire Lord Darnley's memory. He recollected every circumstance of his visit to my parents with the Duke of Portland, and recalled to me many a little forgotten incident.'

The *vie de château* the traveller considered the most agreeable side of English life, by reason of its freedom, and the absence of those wearisome ceremonies which in Germany oppressed both host and guests. The English custom of being always *en évidence*, however, occasioned him considerable surprise. 'Strangers,' he observes, 'have generally only one room allotted to them, and Englishmen seldom go into this room except to sleep, and to dress twice a day, which, even without company, is always *de rigueur*; for all meals are usually taken in public, and any one who wants to write does it in the library. There, also, those who wish to converse, give each other *rendezvous*, to avoid the rest of the society. Here you have an opportunity of gossiping for hours

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with the young ladies, who are always very literarily inclined. Many a marriage is thus concocted or destroyed between the *corpus juris* on the one side, and Bouffler's works on the other, while fashionable novels, as a sort of intermediate link, lie on the tables in the middle.

Early in February the prince paid a visit to Brighton, where he made the acquaintance of Count D'Orsay, and was entertained by Mrs. Fitzherbert. He gives a jaundiced account of two entertainments, a public ball and a musical *soirée*, which he attended while at Brighton, declaring—probably with some truth—that the latter is one of the greatest trials to which a foreigner can be exposed in England. ‘Every mother,’ he explains, ‘who has grown-up daughters, for whom she has had to pay large sums to the music-master, chooses to enjoy the satisfaction of having the youthful talent admired. There is nothing, therefore, but quavering and strumming right and left, so that one is really overpowered and unhappy; and even if an Englishwoman has a natural capacity for singing, she seldom acquires either style or science. The men are much more agreeable *dilettanti*, for they at least give one the diversion of a comical farce. That a man should advance to the piano with far greater confidence than a David, strike with his forefinger the note which he thinks his song should begin with, and then *entonner* like a thunder-clap (generally a tone or two lower than the pitch), and sing through a long aria without an accompaniment of any kind, except the most wonderful distortions of face, is a thing one must have seen to believe it possible, especially in the presence of at least fifty people.’

By the middle of April the season had begun in town, and the prince soon found himself up to the eyes in

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invitations for balls, dinners, breakfasts, and *soirées*. We hear of him dining with the Duke of Clarence, to meet the Duchess of Kent and her daughter; assisting at the Lord Mayor's banquet, which lasted six hours, and at which the chief magistrate made six-and-twenty speeches, long and short; breakfasting with the Duke of Devonshire at Chiswick, being nearly suffocated at the routs of Lady Cowper and Lady Jersey, and attending his first ball at Almack's, in which famous assemblage his expectations were wofully disappointed. 'A large, bare room,' so runs his description, 'with a bad floor, and ropes round it, like the space in an Arab camp parted off for horses; two or three badly-furnished rooms at the side, in which the most wretched refreshments are served, and a company into which, in spite of all the immense difficulty of getting tickets, a great many nobodies had wriggled; in which the dress was as tasteless as the *tournure* was bad—this was all. In a word, a sort of inn-entertainment—the music and lighting the only good things. And yet Almack's is the culminating point of the English world of fashion.'

Unfortunately for his readers, the prince was rather an observer than an auditor; for he describes what he sees vividly enough, but seldom takes the trouble to set down the conversation that he hears. Perhaps he thought it hardly worth recording, for he complains that in England politics had become the main ingredient in social intercourse, that the lighter and more frivolous pleasures suffered by the change, and that the art of conversation would soon be entirely lost. 'In this country,' he unkindly adds, 'I should think it [the art of conversation] never existed, unless, perhaps, in Charles II.'s time. And, indeed, people here are too

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slavishly subject to established usages, too systematic in all their enjoyments, too incredibly kneaded up with prejudices ; in a word, too little vivacious to attain to that unfettered spring and freedom of spirit, which must ever be the sole basis of agreeable society. I must confess that I know none more monotonous, nor more persuaded of its own pre-eminence than the highest society of this country. A stony, marble-cold spirit of caste and fashion rules all classes, and makes the highest tedious, the lowest ridiculous.'

In spite of his dislike to politics as a subject of conversation, his Highness attended debates at the House of Lords and the House of Commons, and was so keenly interested in what he heard that he declared the hours passed like minutes. Canning had just been intrusted by George iv. with the task of forming a government, but had promptly been deserted by six members of the former Ministry, including Wellington, Lord Eldon, and Peel, who were now accused of having resigned in consequence of a cabal or conspiracy against the constitutional prerogative of the king to change his ministers at his own pleasure. In the House of Commons the prince heard Peel's attack on Canning and the new government, which was parried by Brougham. 'In a magnificent speech, which flowed on like a clear stream, Brougham,' we are told, 'tried to disarm his opponent ; now tortured him with sarcasms ; now wrought upon the sensibility, or convinced the reason, of his hearers. The orator closed with the solemn declaration that he was perfectly impartial ; that he *could* be impartial, because it was his fixed determination never, and on no terms, to accept a place in the administration of the kingdom.<sup>1</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> In 1831 Brougham accepted office as Lord Chancellor.

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Canning, the hero of the day, now rose. If his predecessor might be compared to a dexterous and elegant boxer, Canning presented the image of a finished antique gladiator. All was noble, simple, refined; then suddenly his eloquence burst forth like lightning—grand and all-subduing. His speech was, from every point of view, the most complete, as well as the most irresistibly persuasive—the crown and glory of the debate.’

On the following day the prince heard some of the late ministers on their defence in the House of Lords. ‘Here,’ he observes, ‘I saw the great Wellington in terrible straits. He is no orator, and was obliged to enter upon his defence like an accused person. He was considerably agitated; and this senate of his country, though composed of men whom individually, perhaps, he did not care for, appeared more imposing to him *en masse* than Napoleon and his hundred thousands. He stammered much, interrupted and involved himself, but at length he brought the matter tolerably to this conclusion, that there was no “conspiracy.” He occasionally said strong things—probably stronger than he meant, for he was evidently not master of his material. Among other things, the following words pleased me extremely: “I am a soldier and no orator. I am utterly deficient in the talents requisite to play a part in this great assembly. I must be more than insane if I ever entertained the thought, of which I am accused, of becoming Prime Minister.”<sup>1</sup> . . . When I question myself as to the total impression of this day, I must confess that it was at once elevating and melancholy—the former when I fancied myself an Englishman, the latter when I felt myself a German. This twofold senate of the

<sup>1</sup> In January 1828 the duke became Prime Minister.



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people of England, in spite of all the defects and blemishes common to human institutions, is yet grand in the highest degree; and in contemplating its power and operation thus near at hand, one begins to understand why it is that the English nation is, as yet, the first on the face of the earth.'

The traveller was by no means exclusively occupied in hearing and seeing new things. With that strain of practicality which contrasted so oddly with his sentimental and romantic temperament, he kept firmly before his eyes the main object of his visit to England. He had determined at the outset not to sell himself and his title for less than £50,000, but he confesses that, as time passed on, his demands became much more modest. His matrimonial ventures were all faithfully detailed to the presumably sympathising Lucie, for whose sake, the prince persuaded himself, he was far more anxious for success than for his own. But he had not counted on the many obstacles with which he found himself confronted, chief among them being his relations with his former wife. It was known that the ex-princess was still living at Muskau with all the rights and privileges of a *châtelaine*, while the prince never disguised his attachment to her, and openly kept her portrait on his table. English mothers who would have welcomed him as a son-in-law were led to believe that the divorce was only a blind, and that the prince's marriage would be actually, if not legally, a bigamous union. The satirical papers represented him as a fortune-hunter, a Bluebeard who had ill-treated his first wife, and declared that he had proposed for the hand of the dusky Empress of Hayti, then on a visit to Europe.

Still our hero obstinately pursued his quest, laying

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siege to the heart of every presentable-looking heiress to whom he was introduced, and if attention to the art of the toilet could have gained him a rich bride, he would not long have been unsuccessful. In dress he took the genuine interest and delight of the dandy of the period, and marvellous are the descriptions of his costume that he sends to Lucie. For morning visits, of which he sometimes paid fifty in one day, he wore his hair dyed a beautiful black, a new hat, a green neckerchief with gaily coloured stripes, a yellow cashmere waistcoat with metal buttons, an olive-green frock-coat and iron-grey pantaloons. On other occasions he is attired in a dark-brown coat, with a velvet collar, a white neckerchief, in which a thin gold watch-chain is entwined, a waistcoat with a collar of *cramoisie* and gold stars, an under-waistcoat of white satin, embroidered with gold flowers, full black pantaloons, spun silk stockings, and short square shoes. Style such as this could only be maintained at a vast outlay, from the German point of view, the week's washing-bill alone amounting to an important sum. According to the prince's calculation, a London exquisite, during the season of 1827, required every week twenty shirts, twenty-four pocket-handkerchiefs, nine or ten pairs of summer trousers, thirty neckerchiefs, a dozen waistcoats and stockings *à discrétion*. 'I see your housewifely ears aghast, my good Lucie,' he writes, 'but as a dandy cannot get on without dressing three or four times a day, the affair is quite simple.'

However much the prince may have enjoyed the ceremony of the toilet, he strongly objected to the process of hair-dyeing, and his letters are full of complaints of his sufferings and humiliation while undergoing the operation, which, he declares, is a form of

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slow poison, and also an unpleasant reminder that he is really old, but obliged to play the part of youth in order to attain an object that may bring him more misery than happiness. As soon as he is safely married to his heiress, he expresses his determination of looking his full age, so that people might say ‘What a well-preserved old man!’ instead of ‘*Voilà, le ci-devant jeune homme!*’ Still, with all this care and thought, heiresses remained coy, or more probably their parents were ‘difficult.’ The prince’s highly-developed personal vanity was wounded by many a refusal, and so weary did he become of this woman-hunt, that in one letter to Lucie, dated March 5, 1827, he exclaims, ‘Ah, my dearest, if you only had 150,000 thalers, I would marry you again to-morrow!’

### PART II

THE summer months were spent in visits to Windsor and other parks near London, and in a tour through Yorkshire. In October his Highness was back in town, and engaged in a new matrimonial venture. He writes to Lucie that ‘the fortune in question is immense, and if I obtain it, I shall end gloriously.’ In the correspondence published after the prince’s death is the draft of a letter to Mr. Bonham of Titness Park, containing a formal proposal for the hand of his daughter, ‘Miss Harriet,’ and detailing (with considerable reservations) the position of his financial affairs. Muskau, he explains, is worth £14,000 a year, an income which in Germany is equivalent to three times as much in England. ‘Everything belonging to me,’ he continues, ‘is in the best

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possible order; a noble residence at Muskau, and two smaller chateaux, surrounded with large parks and gardens, in fact, all that make enjoy life (*sic*) in the country is amply provided for, and a numerous train of officious (*sic*) of my household are always ready to receive their young princess at her own seat, or if she should prefer town, the court of Prussia will offer her every satisfaction.' Owing to the fact that Muskau was mortgaged for £50,000, he was forced, he confesses, to expect an adequate fortune with his wife, a circumstance to which, if he had been otherwise situated, he should have paid little attention.

This missive was accompanied by a long letter, dated Nov. 1, 1827, to 'Miss Harriet,' in which the suitor explains the circumstances of his former marriage, and of his divorce, the knowledge of which has rendered her uneasy. 'It is rather singular,' he proceeds, 'that in the very first days after my arrival, you, Miss Harriet, were named to me, together with some other young ladies, as heiresses. Now I must confess, at the risk of the fact being doubted in our industrious times, that I myself had a prejudice against, and even some dread of heiresses. I may say that I proved in some way these feelings to exist by marrying a lady with a very small fortune, and afterwards in England by never courting any heiresses further as common civility required. My reasons for so doing are not without foundation. In the first instance, I am a little proud; in the second, I don't want any more than I possess, though I should not reject it, finding it in my way, and besides all this, rich young maidens are not always very amiable.' The prince continues that he had gone, out of principle, into all kinds of society, and seen many charming and handsome girls, but had not been able to discover his affinity.

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At last, after renouncing the idea of marriage, he heard again of Miss Harriet Bonham, not of her fortune this time, but of her many excellent qualities, and the fact that she had refused several splendid offers. His curiosity was now at last aroused ; he sought an opportunity of being introduced to her, and—‘ Dearest Miss Harriet, you know the rest. I thought—and I protest it by all that is sacred—I thought when I left you again, that here at last I had found united all and everything I could wish in a future companion through life. An exterior the most pleasing, a mind and person equally fit for the representation of a court and the delight of a cottage, and above all, that sensibility, that goodness of heart, and that perfect absence of conceitedness which I value more than every other accomplishment. . . . I beheld you, besides all your more essential qualities, so quick as lively, so playful as whitty(*sic*), and nothing really seemed more bewitching to me as when a hearty, joyful laugh changed your thoughtful, noble features to the cheerful appearance of a happy child ! And still through every change your and your friends’ conversation and behaviour always remained distinguished by that perfect breeding and fine tact which, indeed, is to private life what a clear sky is to a landscape. . . .’

There is a great deal more to the same effect, and it is sad to think that all this trouble, all this expenditure of ink and English grammar, was thrown away. Papa Bonham could not pay down the fortune demanded by the prince without injuring the other members of his family ;<sup>1</sup> and although Miss Harriet deplores ‘ the cruel end of all our hopes,’ the negotiations fell through.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bonham’s eldest daughter was the second wife of the first Lord Garvagh.

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The prince consoled himself for his disappointment with a fresh round of sight-seeing. He became deeply enamoured of a steam-engine, of which newly-invented animal he sends the following picturesque description to Lucie: ‘We must now be living in the days of the *Arabian Nights*, for I have seen a creature to-day far surpassing all the fantastic beings of that time. Listen to the monster’s characteristics. In the first place, its food is the cheapest possible, for it eats nothing but wood or coals, and when not actually at work, it requires none. It never sleeps, nor is weary; it is subject to no diseases, if well organised at first; and never refuses its work till worn out by great length of service. It is equally active in all climates, and undertakes all kinds of labour without a murmur. Here it is a miner, there a sailor, a cotton-spinner, a weaver, or a miller; and though a small creature, it draws ninety tons of goods, or a whole regiment of soldiers, with a swiftness exceeding that of the fleetest mail-coaches. At the same time, it marks its own measured steps on a tablet fixed in front of it. It regulates, too, the degree of warmth necessary to its well-being; it has a strange power of oiling its inmost joints when they are stiff, and of removing at pleasure all injurious air that might find the way into its system; but should anything become deranged in it, it warns its master by the loud ringing of a bell. Lastly, it is so docile, in spite of its enormous strength (nearly equal to that of six hundred horses), that a child of four years old is able in a moment to arrest its mighty labours by the pressure of his little finger. Did ever a witch burnt for sorcery produce its equal?’

A few weeks later we hear of one manifestation of the new power, which did not quite come up to the expecta-

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tions of its admirers. On January 16, 1828, the prince writes: 'The new steam-carriage is completed, and goes five miles in half an hour on trial in the Regent's Park. But there was something to repair every moment. I was one of the first of the curious who tried it; but found the smell of oiled iron, which makes steamboats so unpleasant, far more insufferable here. Stranger still is another vehicle to which I yesterday intrusted my person. It is nothing less than a carriage drawn by a paper kite, very like those the children fly. This is the invention of a schoolmaster, who is so skilful in the guidance of his vehicle, that he can get on very fairly with half a wind, but with a completely fair one, and good roads, he goes a mile in three-quarters of a minute. The inventor proposes to traverse the African deserts in this manner, and has contrived a place behind, in which a pony stands like a footman, and in case of a calm, can be harnessed to the carriage.'

In the early part of 1828 Henriette Sontag arrived in London, and the prince at once fell a victim to her charms. The fascinating singer, then barely three-and-twenty, was already the idol of the public, at the very summit of her renown. Amazing prices were paid for seats when she was announced to appear. Among his Highness's papers was found a ticket for a box at the opera on 'Madame Sontag's night,' on which he notes that he had sold a diamond clasp to pay the eighty guineas demanded for the bit of cardboard. He was in love once again with all the ardour of youth, and for the moment all thoughts of a marriage of convenience were dismissed from his mind. He was now eager for a love-match with the fair Henriette, whose attractions had rendered him temporarily forgetful of those of Muskau.

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But Mademoiselle Sontag, though carried away by the passionate wooing of the prince, actually remembered that she had other ties, probably her engagement to Rossi, to which it was her duty to remain true. She told her lover that he must learn to forget her, and that when they parted at the conclusion of the London season, they must never meet again. The prince was heart-broken at the necessity for separation, and we are assured that he never forgot Henriette Sontag (though she had many successors in his affections), and that after his return to Germany he placed a gilded bust of the singer in his park, in order that he might have her image ever before his eyes.

In the hope of distracting his thoughts from his disappointment, Prince Pückler decided to make a lengthened tour through Wales and Ireland, and with this object in view he set out in July 1828. Before his departure, however, he had an interesting rencontre at a dinner-party given by the Duchess of St. Albans—the *ci-devant* Harriet Melton. ‘I arrived late,’ says the prince, in his account of the incident, ‘and was placed between my hostess and a tall, very simple, but benevolent-looking man of middle age, who spoke broad Scotch—a dialect anything but agreeable; and would probably have struck me by nothing else, if I had not discovered that I was sitting next to ——, the Great Unknown! It was not long ere many a sally of dry, poignant wit fell from his lips, and many an anecdote told in the most unpretending manner. His eye, too, glanced whenever he was animated, with such a clear, good-natured lustre, and such an expression of true-hearted kindness, that it was impossible not to conceive a sort of affection for him. Towards the end of the dinner he and Sir Francis



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Burdett told ghost-stories, half terrible, half humorous, one against the other. . . . A little concert concluded the evening, in which the very pretty daughter of the great bard—a healthy-looking Highland beauty—took part, and Miss Stephens sang nothing but Scottish ballads.’

Before entering upon a new field of observation, the prince summed up his general impressions of London society with a candour that cannot have been very agreeable to his English readers. The goddess of Fashion, he observes, reigns in England alone with a despotic and inexorable sway; while the spirit of caste here receives a power, consistency, and completeness of development unexampled in any other country. ‘Every class of society in England, as well as every field, is separated from every other by a hedge of thorns. Each has its own manners and turns of expression, and, above all, a supreme and absolute contempt for all below it. . . . Now although the aristocracy does not stand *as such* upon the pinnacle of this strange social edifice, it yet exercises great influence over it. It is, indeed, difficult to become fashionable without being of good descent; but it by no means follows that a man is so in virtue of being well-born—still less of being rich. Ludicrous as it may sound, it is a fact that while the present king is a very fashionable man, his father was not so in the smallest degree, and that none of his brothers have any pretensions to fashion; which unquestionably is highly to their honour.’ ‘The truth of this observation is borne out by the story of Beau Brummell, who, when offended by some action of the Regent’s, exclaimed, ‘If this sort of thing goes on, I shall cut Wales, and bring old George into fashion!’

‘A London exclusive of the present day,’ continues

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our censor, 'is nothing more than a bad, flat, dull imitation of a French *roué* of the Regency. Both have in common selfishness, levity, boundless vanity, and an utter want of heart. But what a contrast if we look further! In France the absence of all morality and honesty was in some degree atoned for by the most refined courtesy, the poverty of soul by agreeableness and wit. What of all this has the English dandy to offer? His highest triumph is to appear with the most wooden manners, as little polished as will suffice to avoid castigation; nay, to contrive even his civilities so that they are as near as may be to affronts—this is the style of deportment that confers on him the greatest celebrity. Instead of a noble, high-bred ease, to have the courage to offend against every restraint of decorum; to invert the relation in which his sex stands to women, so that they appear the attacking, and he the passive or defensive party; to cut his best friends if they cease to have the strength and authority of fashion; to delight in the ineffably *fude* jargon and affectations of his set, and always to know what is "the thing"—these are the accomplishments that distinguish a young "lion" of fashion. Whoever reads the best of the recent English novels—those by the author of *Pelham*—may be able to abstract from them a tolerably just idea of English fashionable society, provided he does not forget to deduct qualities which the national self-love has erroneously claimed—namely, grace for its *roués*, seductive manners and witty conversation for its dandies.'

The foregoing is a summary of the prince's lengthy indictment against London society. 'I saw in the fashionable world,' he observes in conclusion, 'only too frequently, and with few exceptions, a profound vulgarity

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of thought ; an immorality little veiled or adorned ; the most undisguised arrogance ; and the coarsest neglect of all kindly feelings and attentions haughtily assumed for the sake of shining in a false and despicable refinement ; even more inane and intolerable to a healthy mind than the awkward stiffness of the declared Nobodies. It has been said that vice and poverty form the most revolting combination ; since I have been in England, vice and boorish rudeness seem to me to form a still more disgusting union.'

The prince's adventures in Wales and Ireland, with the recital of which he has filled up the best part of two volumes, must here be dismissed in as many paragraphs. On his tour through Wales, he left his card on the Ladies of Llangollen, who promptly invited him to lunch. Fortunately, he had previously been warned of his hostesses' peculiarities of dress and appearance. 'Imagine,' he writes, 'two ladies, the elder of whom, Lady Eleanor Butler, a short, robust woman, begins to feel her years a little, being nearly eighty-three ; the other, a tall and imposing person, esteems herself still youthful, being only seventy-four. Both wore their still abundant hair combed straight back and powdered, a round man's hat, a man's cravat and waistcoat, but in the place of "inexpressibles," a short petticoat and boots : the whole covered by a coat of blue cloth, of quite a peculiar cut. Over this Lady Eleanor wore, first the grand cordon of the order of St. Louis across her shoulders ; secondly, the same order round her neck ; thirdly, the small cross of the same in her button-hole ; and, *pour comble de gloire*, a golden lily of nearly the natural size as a star. So far the effect was somewhat ludicrous. But now you must imagine both ladies

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with that agreeable *aisance*, that air of the world of the *ancien régime*, courteous, entertaining, without the slightest affectation, speaking French as well as any Englishwoman of my acquaintance; and, above all, with that essentially polite, unconstrained, simply cheerful manner of the good society of that day, which in our hard-working, business age appears to be going to utter decay.'

Thanks to his letters of introduction and the friendships that he struck up on the road, the prince was able occasionally to step out of the beaten tourist tracks, and to see something of the more intimate side of Irish social life. He has given a lively and picturesque account of his experiences, which included an introduction to Lady Morgan,<sup>1</sup> and to her charming nieces, the Miss Clarkes (who made a profound impression on his susceptible heart), a sentimental journey through Wicklow, a glance at the humours of Donnybrook Fair, a visit to O'Connell at Derrinane Abbey, a peep into the wilds of Connaught, an Emancipation dinner at Cashel, where he made his *début* as an English orator, and an expedition to the lakes of Killarney. All this, which was probably novel and interesting to the German public, contains little that is not familiar to the modern English reader. The sketch of O'Connell is sufficiently vivid to bear quotation.

'Daniel O'Connell,' observes the prince, after his visit to Derrinane, 'is no common man—though the man of the commonalty. His power is so great that at this moment it only depends on him to raise the standard of rebellion from one end of the island to the other. He is, however, too sharp-sighted, and much

<sup>1</sup> See page 142.

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too sure of attaining his ends by safer means, to wish to bring on any such violent crisis. He has certainly shown great dexterity in availing himself of the temper of the country at this moment, legally, openly, and in the face of Government, to acquire a power scarcely inferior to that of the sovereign; indeed, though without arms or armies, in some instances far surpassing it. For how would it have been possible for his Majesty George IV. to withhold 40,000 of his faithful Irishmen for three days from whisky drinking? which O'Connell actually accomplished in the memorable Clare election. The enthusiasm of the people rose to such a height that they themselves decreed and inflicted a punishment for drunkenness. The delinquent was thrown into the river, and held there for two hours, during which time he was made to undergo frequent submersions. . . . On the whole, O'Connell exceeded my expectations. His exterior is attractive, and the expression of intelligent good-humour, united with determination and prudence, which marks his countenance, is extremely winning. He has perhaps more of persuasiveness than of large and lofty eloquence; and one frequently perceives too much design and manner in his words. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to follow his powerful arguments with interest, to view the martial dignity of his carriage without pleasure, or to refrain from laughing at his wit. . . . He has received from Nature an invaluable gift for a party-leader, a magnificent voice, united to good lungs and a strong constitution. His understanding is sharp and quick, and his acquirements out of his profession not inconsiderable. With all this his manners are, as I have said, winning and popular, though somewhat of the

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actor is noticeable in them; they do not conceal his very high opinion of himself, and are occasionally tinged by what an Englishman would call *vulgarity*. But where is there a picture without shade?’

The prince's matrimonial projects had been pursued only in half-hearted fashion during this year, and on his return to England in December, he seems to have thrown up the game in despair. On January 2, 1829, he turned his back on our perfidious shores, and made a short tour in France before proceeding to Muskau. In one of his letters to Lucie he admits that on his return journey he had plenty of material for reflection. Two precious years had been wasted, absence from his dearest friend had been endured, a large sum of money had been spent in keeping up a dashing appearance—and all in vain. He consoles himself with the amazing reflection that Parry had failed in three attempts to reach the North Pole, and Bonaparte, after heaping victory on victory for twenty years, had perished miserably in St. Helena!

But if the prince had not accomplished his design of carrying off a British heiress, his sojourn in England brought him a prize of a different kind—namely, the laurel crown of fame. His *Briefe eines Verstorbenen*, the first volumes of which were published anonymously in 1830, was greeted with an almost unanimous outburst of admiration and applause. The critics vied with each other in praising a work in which, according to their verdict, the grace and piquancy of France were combined with the analytical methods and the profound philosophy of Germany. In England, as was only to be expected, the chorus of applause was not unmixed with hisses and catcalls. The author had,

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however, been exceptionally fortunate in his translator, Sarah Austin, whose version of the Letters, entitled *The Tour of a German Prince*, was described by the *Westminster Review* as 'the best modern translation of a prose work that has ever appeared, and perhaps our only translation from the German. As an original work, the ease and facility of the style would be admired; as a translation, it is unrivalled.' Croker reviewed the book in the *Quarterly* in his accustomed strain of playful brutality, rejoiced savagely over the numerous blunders,<sup>1</sup> and credited the author with almost as many blasphemies as Lady Morgan herself. The *Edinburgh*, in a more impartial notice, observed that a great part of the work had no other merit than that of being an act of individual treachery against the hospitalities of private life, and commented on the fact that while the masterpieces of Goethe and Schiller were still untranslated, the *Tour of Prince Pückler-Muskau* had been bought up in a month.

The prince was far too vain of his unexpected literary success to preserve his anonymity, and the ink-craving having laid hold upon him, he lost no time in setting to work upon another book. The semblance of a separation between himself and Lucie had now been thrown aside. During the summer months they lived at Muskau, where they laboured together over plans for the embellishment of the gardens, while in the winter they kept up a splendid establishment in Berlin. The sight of a divorced couple living together seems to have shocked the Berliners far more than that of a married couple living apart, but to Pückler, as a

<sup>1</sup> The most amusing of these is the derivation of the Prince of Wales' motto 'Ich dien' from two Welsh words, 'Eich deyn,' said to signify 'This is your man!'

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chartered 'original,' much was forgiven. At this time he went a good deal into literary society, and became intimate with several women-writers, among them the Gräfin Hahn-Hahn, Rahel, and that amazing lady, Bettine von Arnim. With the last-named he struck up an intellectual friendship which roused the jealousy of Lucie, and was finally wrecked by Bettine's attempts to obtain a spiritual empire over the lord of Muskau.

In 1832 the prince's debts amounted to 500,000 thalers, and he was obliged once again to face the fact that he could only save himself from ruin by a wealthy marriage, or by the sale of his estate. In a long letter he laid the state of the case before his faithful companion, pointing out that even at forty-seven, he, with his title and his youthful appearance, might hope to secure a bride worth 300,000 thalers, but that as long as his ex-wife remained at Muskau he was hardly likely to be successful in his matrimonial speculations. Lucie again consented to sacrifice herself in the good cause; but the prince, a man of innumerable *bonnes fortunes* according to his own account, was curiously unfortunate as a would-be Benedick. The German heiresses were no more propitious to his suit than the English ones had been; and though, as he plaintively observes, he would have liked nothing better than to be a Turkish pasha with a hundred and fifty sultanas, he was unable to obtain a single Christian wife.

In 1834 the prince published two books, *Tutti Frutti*, a collection of stories and sketches, and *Observations on Landscape-Gardening*. *Tutti Frutti* was by no means so popular as the *Briefe eines Verstorbenen*, but the *Observations* took rank as a standard work. The project of a journey to America having been abandoned,



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the prince now determined to spend the winter in Algiers, leaving Lucie in charge at Muskau. This modest programme enlarged itself into a tour in the East, which lasted for more than five years. The traveller's adventures during this period have been described in his *Semilasso in Africa*, *Aus Mehemet's Reich*, *Die Rückkehr*, and other works, which added to their author's fame, and nearly sufficed to pay his expenses. We hear of him breaking hearts at Tunis and Athens, shooting big game in the Soudan, astonishing the Arabs by his horsemanship, and meddling in Egyptian politics. It was not until 1838 that, moved by Lucie's complaints of her loneliness, he reluctantly abandoned his plan of settling in the East, and turned his face towards Europe. On the homeward journey he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and turned out of his course for the visit to Lady Hester Stanhope that has already been described.<sup>1</sup>

His Highness arrived at Vienna in the autumn of 1839, bringing in his suite an Abyssinian slave-girl, Machbuba, whom he had bought a couple of years before, and who had developed such wonderful qualities of head and heart, that he could not bring himself to part from her. But Lucie obstinately refused to receive Machbuba at Muskau, and declared that the prince's reputation would be destroyed for ever, if he brought a favourite slave under the same roof as his 'wife,' and thus sinned against the laws of outward seemliness. So Machbuba and the master who, like another Pygmalion, seems to have endowed this dusky Galatea with a mind and soul, remained at Vienna, where the Abyssinian, clad in a picturesque Mameluke's costume, accompanied the prince

<sup>1</sup> See page 269.

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to all the public spectacles, and became a nine days' wonder to the novelty-loving Viennese. But the severity of a European winter proved fatal to poor Machbuba, consumption laid its grip upon her, and it was as a dying girl that at last she was taken to the Baths of Muskau. Lucie received this once-dreaded rival kindly, but at once carried off the prince for a visit to Berlin, and in the absence of the master whom she worshipped with a spaniel-like devotion, Machbuba breathed her last. The slave-girl was laid to rest amid all the pomp and ceremony of a state funeral, the principal inhabitants of Muskau and the neighbourhood followed her to her grave, and on the Sunday following her death the chaplain delivered a eulogy on Machbuba's virtues, and the fatherly benevolence of her master.

The prince was temporarily broken-hearted at the death of his favourite, but his mercurial spirits soon reasserted themselves, and a round of visits to the various German courts restored him to his accustomed self-complacency. The idea of selling Muskau, and thus ridding himself of the burden of his debts, once more occupied his mind. A handsome offer for the estate had been refused a few years before, in compliance with the wishes of Lucie, who loved Muskau even better than its master, and had appealed to the king to prevent the sale. But in 1845 came another offer from Count Hatzfeld of 1,700,000 thalers, which, in spite of Lucie's tears and entreaties, the prince decided to accept. Although it cost him a sharp pang to give up to another the spot of earth on which he had lavished so much time, so much labour, and so much money, he fully appreciated the advantage of an unembarrassed income and complete freedom of movement.

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For a year or two after the sale, he led a wandering life, with Berlin or Weimar for his headquarters. In 1846, shortly before his sixtieth birthday, he met, so he confided to the long-suffering Lucie, the only woman he had ever loved, or at least the only woman he had ever desired to marry. Unfortunately, the lady, who was young, beautiful, clever, of high rank, large fortune, and angelic disposition, had been married for some years to a husband who is described as ugly, ill-tempered, jealous, and incredibly selfish. The prince's letters at this period are filled with raptures over the virtues of his new *inamorata*, and lamentations that he had met her too late. For though his passion was returned the lady was a strict Catholic, for whom a divorce was out of the question, and for once this hardened Lothario shrank from an elopement, with the resultant stain upon the reputation of the woman he loved. In 1846 he parted from his affinity, who survived the separation little more than a year, and retired with a heavy heart to his paternal castle of Branitz, near Kottbus, where he occupied himself in planting a park and laying out gardens. Branitz was only about a tenth part the size of Muskau, and stood in the midst of a sandy waste, but at more than sixty years of age the prince set himself, with all the ardour of youth, to conjure a paradise out of the wilderness. Forest trees were transplanted, lakes and canals dug, hills appeared out of the level fields, and, in short, this 'earth-tamer,' as Rahel called him, created not only a park, but a complete landscape.

The remainder of our hero's eventful career must be briefly summarised. In 1851 he made a flight to England to see the Great Exhibition. Here he renewed his acquaintance with many old friends, among them

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the Duchess of Somerset, who told him that she had known his father well twenty-five years before. The prince, who has been described as a male Ninon de L'Enclos, was naturally delighted at being mistaken for his own son. In 1852 the work at Branitz was so far advanced that its lord invited Lucie to come and take up her abode at the Schloss. But the poor lady's troubled life was nearing its close. She had a paralytic stroke in the autumn of this year, and remained an invalid until her death, which took place at Branitz in May, 1854.

In the loneliness that followed, the prince amused himself by keeping up a lively correspondence with his feminine acquaintance, for whom, even at seventy, he had not lost his fascinations. His celebrity as an author and a traveller brought him many anonymous correspondents, and he never wearied of reading and answering the sentimental effusions of his unknown admirers. In 1863 he paid a visit incognito to Muskau, the first since he had left it eighteen years before, though Branitz was but a few leagues away. He was recognised at once, and great was the joy in the little town over the return of its old ruler, who was honoured with illuminations, the discharge of cannon, and torchlight processions. The estate had passed into the hands of Prince Frederick of the Netherlands, who had carried out all its former master's plans, and added many improvements of his own. Pückler generously admired the splendour that he had had so large a share in creating, and then went contentedly back to his *kleine Branitz*, his only regret being that he could not live to see it, like Muskau, in the fulness of its matured beauty. In 1866, when war broke out between Prussia and Austria, this grand old man of eighty-one volunteered for active service, and

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begged to be attached to the headquarters' staff. His request was granted, and he went gallantly through the brief campaign, but was bitterly disappointed because he was not able to be present at the battle of Königgrätz, owing to the indisposition of the king, upon whom he was in attendance.

In 1870, when France declared war against Prussia, he again volunteered, and was deeply mortified when the king declined his services on account of his advanced age. For the first time he seems to have realised that he was old, and it is probable that the disappointment preyed upon his spirits, for his strength rapidly declined, his memory failed, and on February 4, 1871, after a brief illness, he sank peacefully to rest. He was buried in a tomb that he had built for himself many years before, a pyramid sixty feet high, which stood upon an acre of ground in the centre of an artificial lake. The two inscriptions that the prince chose for his sepulchre illustrate, appropriately enough, the sharply contrasting qualities of his strange individuality—his romantic sentimentality, and his callous cynicism. The first inscription was a line from the Koran :

‘Graves are the mountain summits of a far-off, fairer world.’

The second, chosen presumably for the sake of the paradox, was the French apothegm :

‘ Allons  
Chez  
Pluton plutôt plus tard.’

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Cast. 1/2 p. 6

*Mary Howitt.*  
*From*  
*a portrait by Margaret Gillies*





# WILLIAM AND MARY HOWITT

## PART I

THE names of William and Mary Howitt are inextricably associated with the England of the early nineteenth century, with the re-discovery of the beauty and interest of their native land, with the renaissance of the national passion for country pleasures and country pursuits, and with the slow, painful struggle for a wider freedom, a truer humanity, a fuller, more gracious life. The Howitts had no genius, nor were they pioneers, but, where the unfamiliar was concerned, they were open-minded and receptive to a degree that is unfortunately rare in persons of their perfect uprightness and strong natural piety. If they flashed no new radiance upon the world, they were always among the first to kindle their little torches at the new lamps; and they did good service in handing back the light to those who, but for them, would have had sat in the shadow, and flung stones at the incomprehensible illuminations.

Of the two minds, Mary's was the finer and the more original. It was one of those everyday miracles—the miracles that do happen—that in spite of the severity, the narrowness, the repression of her early training, she should have forced her way through the shell of rigid sectarianism, repudiated her heritage of drab denials, and opened both heart and mind to the new poetry, the

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new art, and the new knowledge. In her husband she found a kindred spirit, and during the more than fifty years of their pilgrimage together their eyes were ever turned towards the same goal. Though not equally gifted, they were equally disinterested, equally enlightened, and equally anxious for the advancement of humanity. They took themselves and their vocation seriously, and produced an immense quantity of careful, conscientious work, the work of honest craftsmen rather than artists, with the quality of a finished piece of cabinet-making, or a strip of fine embroidery.

Mary Howitt was the daughter of Samuel Botham, a land-surveyor at Uttoxeter. His father, the descendant of a long line of Staffordshire yeomen, Quakers by persuasion, loved a roaming life, and having married a maltster's widow with a talent for business management, was left free to indulge his own propensities. He seems to have had a talent for medical science of an empirical kind, for he dabbled in magnetism and electricity, and wandered about the country collecting herbs for headache-snuffs, and healing ointments. Samuel, as soon as he had served his apprenticeship, found plenty of employment in the neighbourhood, the country gentlemen, who had taken alarm at the revolutionary ideas newly introduced from France, being anxious to have their acres measured, and their boundaries accurately defined. While at work upon Lord Talbot's Welsh estates in 1795, he became attracted by a 'convinced' Friend, named Ann Wood. The interesting discovery that both had a passion for nuts, together with the gentle match-making of a Quaker patriarch, led to an engagement, and the couple were married in December, 1796.

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Ann Wood was the granddaughter of William Wood, whose contract for supplying Ireland with copper coin (obtained by bribing the Duchess of Kendal) was turned into a national grievance by Swift, and led to the publication of the *Drapier Letters*. Although Wood's halfpence were admitted to be excellent coin, and Ireland was short of copper, the feeling against their circulation was so intense, that Ministers were obliged to withdraw the patent, Wood being compensated for his losses with a grant of £3000 a year for a term of years, and 'places' for some of his fifteen children. Ann's father, Charles, when very young, was appointed assay-master to Jamaica. After his return to England in middle life he married a lively widow, went into business as an iron-master near Merthyr Tydvil, and distinguished himself by introducing platinum into Europe, having first met with the semi-metal in Jamaica, whither it had been brought from Carthagenia in New Spain. After his death, Ann, the only serious member of a 'worldly' family, found it impossible to remain in the frivolous atmosphere of her home, and determined, in modern fashion, to 'live her own life.' After spending some years as governess or companion in various families, she became converted to Quaker doctrines, and was received into the Society of Friends.

Samuel Botham took his bride to live in the paternal home at Uttoxeter, where the preparation of the old quack doctor's herbal medicines caused her a great deal of discomfort. In the course of the next three years two daughters were born to the couple; Anna in 1797, and Mary on March 12, 1799. At the time of Mary's birth her parents were passing through a period of pecuniary distress, owing to a disastrous speculation; but

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with the opening of the new century a piece of great good fortune befell Samuel Botham. He was one of the two surveyors chosen to enclose and divide the Chase of Needwood in the county of Stafford. In the early years of the nineteenth century there was, unfortunately for England, a mania for enclosing commons, and felling ancient forests. Needwood, which extended for many miles, contained great numbers of magnificent old oaks, limes, and hollies, and no less than twenty thousand head of deer. In after years, Mary Howitt often regretted that her family should have had a hand in the destruction of so vast an extent of solitude and beauty, in a country that was already thickly populated and trimly cultivated. Still, for the nine years that the work of 'disafforesting' lasted, the two little girls got a great deal of enjoyment out of the ruined Chase, spending long summer days in its grassy glades, while their father parcelled out the land and marked trees for the axe.

In her *Autobiography*,<sup>1</sup> Mary declares that it is impossible for her to give an adequate idea of the stillness and isolation of her childish life. So intense was the silence of the Quaker household, that, at four years old, Anna had to be sent to a dame's-school in order that she might learn to talk; while even after both children had attained the use of speech, their ignorance of the right names for the most ordinary feelings and actions obliged them to coin words of their own. 'My childhood was happy in many respects,' she writes. 'It was so, as far as physical health, the enjoyment of a beautiful country, and the companionship of a dearly loved sister

<sup>1</sup> Edited by her daughter Margaret, and published by Messrs. Isbister in 1889.

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could make it—but oh, there was such a cloud over all from the extreme severity of a so-called religious education, it almost made cowards and hypocrites of us, and made us feel that, if this were religion, it was a thing to be feared and hated.’ The family reading consisted chiefly of the writings of Madame Guyon, Thomas à Kempis, and St. Francis de Sales, while for light literature there were Telemachus, Fox’s *Book of Martyrs*, and a work on the *Persecution of the Friends*. But it is impossible for even the most pious of Quakers to guard against all the stratagems by which the spirit of evil—or human nature—contrives to gain an entrance into a godly household. In the case of the Botham children an early knowledge of good and evil was learnt from an apparently respectable nurse, who made her little charges acquainted with most of the scandals of the neighbourhood, accustomed their infant ears to oaths, and—most terrible of all—taught them to play whist, she herself taking dummy, and transforming the nursery tea-tray into a card-table. In that silent household it was easy to keep a secret, and though the little girls often trembled at their nurse’s language, they never betrayed her confidence.

In 1806 another daughter, Emma, was born to the Bothams, and in 1808 a son, Charles. In the midst of their joy and amazement at the news that they had a brother, the little girls asked each other anxiously : ‘Will our parents like it?’ Only a short time before a stranger had inquired if they had any brothers, and they had replied in all seriousness : ‘Oh no, our parents do not approve of boys.’ Now, much to their relief, they found that their father and mother highly approved of their own boy, who became the spoilt darling of the



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austere household. A new nurse was engaged for the son and heir, a lady of many love-affairs, who made Mary her confidante, and induced the child, then nine years old, to write an imaginary love-letter. The unlucky letter was laid between the pages of the worthy Madame Guyon, and there discovered by Mr. Botham. Not much was said on the subject of the document, which seems to have been considered too awful to bear discussion; but the children were removed from the influence of the nurse, and allowed to attend a day-school in the neighbourhood, though only on condition that they sat apart from the other children in order to avoid contamination with possible worldlings.

In 1809 the two elder sisters were sent to a Quaker school at Croydon, where they found themselves the youngest, the most provincial, and the worst dressed of the little community. Even in advanced old age, Mary had a keen memory for the costumes of her childhood, and the mortification that these had caused her. On their arrival at school the little girls were attired in brown pelisses, cut plain and straight, without plait or fold, and hooked down the front to obviate the necessity for buttons, which, being in the nature of trimmings, were regarded as an indulgence of the lust of the eye. On their heads they wore little drab beaver bonnets, also destitute of trimmings, and so plain in shape that even the Quaker hatter had to order special blocks for their manufacture. The other girls were busy over various kinds of fashionable fancy-work, but the little Bothams were expected, in their leisure moments, to make half-a-dozen linen shirts for their father, button-holes and all. They had never learnt to net, to weave coloured paper into baskets, to plait split

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straw into patterns, nor any of the other amateur handicrafts of the day. But they were clever with their fingers, and could copy almost anything that they had seen done. ‘We could buckle flax or spin a rope,’ writes Mary. ‘We could drive a nail, put in a screw or draw it out. We knew the use of a glue-pot, and how to paper a room. We soon furnished ourselves with coloured paper for plaiting, and straw to split and weave into net; and I shall never forget my admiration of a pattern of diamonds woven with strips of gold paper on a black ground. It was my first attempt at artistic handiwork.’

After a few months at Croydon the girls were recalled to Uttoxeter on account of their mother’s illness; and as soon as she recovered they were despatched to another Friends’ school at Sheffield. In 1812, when Mary was only thirteen and Anna fifteen, their education was supposed to be completed, and they returned home for good. But Mr. Botham was dissatisfied with his daughters’ attainments, and engaged the master of the boys’ school to teach them Latin, mathematics, and the use of the globes. The death of this instructor obliged them thenceforward to rely on a system of self-education. ‘We retained and perfected our rudimentary knowledge,’ Mary writes, ‘by instructing others. Our father fitted up a school-room for us in the stable-loft, where, twice a week, we were allowed to teach poor children. In this room, also, we instructed our dear little brother and sister. Our father, in his beautiful handwriting, used to set them copies, texts of Scripture, such as he no doubt had found of a consolatory nature. On one occasion, however, I set the copies, and well remember the tribulation I

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experienced in consequence. I always warred in my mind against the enforced gloom of our home, and having for my private reading at that time Young's *Night Thoughts*, came upon what seemed to me the very spirit of true religion, a cheerful heart gathering up the joyfulness of surrounding nature; on which the poet says: "'Tis impious in a good man to be sad." How I rejoiced in this!—and thinking it a great fact which ought to be noised abroad, wrote it down in my best hand as a copy. It fell under our father's eye, and sorely grieved he was at such a sentiment, and extremely angry with me as its promulgator.'

The sisters can never have found the time hang heavy on their hands, for in addition to their educational duties, their mother required them to be expert in all household matters; while, in their scanty hours of leisure, they attempted, in the face of every kind of discouragement, to satisfy their strong natural craving for beauty and knowledge. 'We studied poetry, botany, and flower-painting,' Mary writes. 'These pursuits were almost out of the pale of permitted Quaker pleasures, but we pursued them with a perfect passion, doing in secret that which we dared not do openly, such as reading Shakespeare, the elder novelists, and translations of the classics. We studied French and chemistry, and enabled ourselves to read Latin, storing our minds with a whole mass of heterogeneous knowledge. This was good as far as it went, but I now deplore the secrecy, the subterfuge, and the fear under which this ill-digested, ill-arranged knowledge was obtained.'

The young Quakeresses picked up ideas and models for their artistic handicraft from the most unlikely

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sources. A shop-window, full of dusty plaster medallions for mantelpiece decorations, gave them their first notions of classic design. The black Wedgwood ware was to be seen in nearly every house in Uttoxeter, while a few of the more prosperous inhabitants possessed vases and jugs in the pale blue ware, ornamented with graceful figures. These precious specimens the Botham sisters used to borrow, and contrived to reproduce the figures by means of moulds made of paper pulp. They also etched flowers and landscapes on panes of glass, and manufactured 'transparencies' out of different thicknesses of cap-paper. 'I feel a sort of tender pity for Anna and myself,' wrote Mary long afterwards, 'when I remember how we were always seeking and struggling after the beautiful, and after artistic production, though we knew nothing of art. I am thankful that we made no alms-baskets, or hideous abortions of that kind. What we did was from the innate yearnings of our souls for perfection in form and colour; and our accomplished work, though crude and poor, was the genuine outcome of our own individuality.'

It was one of the heaviest crosses of Mary's girlish days that she and Anna were not permitted to exercise their clever fingers, and indulge their taste for the beautiful, in their own dress. But they found a faint vicarious pleasure in making pretty summer gowns, and embroidering elaborate muslin collars for a girl-friend who was allowed to wear fashionable clothes, and even to go to balls. Even their ultra-plain costumes, however, could not disguise the fact that Anna and Mary Botham were comely damsels, and they had several suitors among the young men-Friends of Uttoxeter. But the sisters held a low opinion of the mental endow-

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ments of the average Quaker, an opinion that was only shaken by a report of the marvellous attainments of young William Howitt of Heanor, who was said to be not only a scholar, but a born genius. William's mother, Phœbe, herself a noted amateur healer, was an old friend of Mary's grandfather, the herbal doctor, but the young people had never met. However, in the autumn of 1818, William paid a visit to some relations at Uttoxeter, and there made the acquaintance of the Botham girls, who discovered that this young man-Friend shared nearly all their interests, and was full of sympathy with their studies and pursuits.

Before the end of the year Mary Botham was engaged to William Howitt, he being then six-and-twenty and she nineteen. 'The tastes of my future husband and my own were strongly similar,' she observes, 'so also was our mental culture; but he was in every direction so far in advance of me as to become my teacher and guide. Knowledge in the broadest sense was the aim of our intellectual efforts; poetry and nature were the paths that led to it. Of ballad poetry I was already enamoured. William made me acquainted with the realistic life-pictures of Crabbe; the bits of nature and poetry in the vignettes of Bewick; with the earliest works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, and the first marvellous prose productions of the author of *Waverley*.'

After an engagement lasting a little more than two years, William and Mary were married on April 16, 1821, the bride wearing her first silk gown—a pretty dove-colour—and a white silk shawl, finery which filled her soul with rapture. The couple spent the honeymoon in the bridegroom's native Derbyshire, visiting

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every spot of beauty or haunt of old tradition in that country of the romantic and the picturesque.

Incorporated in his wife's *Autobiography* is William Howitt's narrative of his parentage and youthful days, which is supplemented by his *Boys' Country Book*, the true story of his early adventures and experiences. The Howitts, he tells us, were descended from a family named Hewitt, the younger branch of which obtained Wansley Hall, near Nottingham, through marriage with an heiress, and changed the spelling of their name. His ancestors had been, for generations, a rollicking set, all wofully lacking in prudence and sobriety. About the end of the seventeenth century, one Thomas Howitt, great-great-grandfather of William, married Catherine, heiress of the Charltons of Chilwell. But Thomas so disgusted his father-in-law by his drunken habits that Mr. Charlton disinherited his daughter, who loyally refused to leave her husband, and left his property to a stranger who chanced to bear his name. After this misfortune the Howitts descended somewhat in the social scale, and, having no more substance to waste, reformed their ways and forsook all riotous living. William's father, who held a post as manager of a Derbyshire colliery, married a Quaker lady, Phoebe Tantom of the Fall, Heanor, and was himself received into the Society of Friends in 1783.

William received a good plain education at a Quaker school at Ackworth, and grew up a genuine country lad, scouring the lanes on his famous grey pony, Peter Scroggins, the acknowledged leader of the village lads in bird-nesting and rat-hunting expeditions, and taking his full share of the work on his father's little farm. Long afterwards he used to say that every scene in and

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about Heanor was photographed with absolute distinctness on his brain, and he loved to recall the long days that he had spent in following the plough, chopping turnips for the cattle, tramping over the snow-covered fields after red-wing and fieldfare, collecting acorns for the swine, or hunting through the barns for eggs. The Howitt family was much less strict than that of the Bothams, for in the winter evenings the boys were allowed to play draughts and dominoes, while at Christmas there were games of forfeits, blind-man's buff, and fishing for the ring in the great posset-pot.

On leaving school at fifteen, William amused himself for a couple of years on the farm, though, curiously enough, he never thought of becoming a farmer in good earnest; indeed, at this time he seems to have had no distinct bias towards any profession. Mr. Howitt had somehow become imbued with Rousseau's doctrine that every boy, whatever his position in life, should learn a mechanical handicraft, in order that, if all else failed, he might be able to earn his own living by the labour of his hands. Having decided that William should learn carpentering, the boy was apprenticed for four years to a carpenter and builder at Mansfield, on the outskirts of Sherwood Forest. The four precious years were practically thrown away, except for the enjoyment obtained from long solitary rambles amid the picturesque associations of the Forest, and the knowledge of natural history gained from close observation of the wild life of that romantic district.

It was not until his twenty-first birthday that William's indentures were out, and as he was still unable to make up his mind about a profession—it must be remembered that the law, the church, the army

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and navy were all closed to a Quaker—he spent the next seven years at home, angling in the streams like his favourite hero, Isaac Walton, and striving, by dint of hard study, to make up the many deficiencies in his education. He taught himself Latin, French, and Italian, besides working at botany, chemistry, and the dispensing of medicines. It was during these seven years of uncertainty and experiment that William read Washington Irving's *Sketches of Geoffrey Crayon*, which produced a strong impression on his mind. With the inspiration of this book hot upon him, he made a tour on foot through the Peak country, and afterwards wrote an account of his adventures in what he fondly believed to be the style of Geoffrey Crayon. The paper was printed in a local journal under the title of *A Pedestrian Pilgrimage through the Peak*, by Wilfrid Wendle. This was not William Howitt's first literary essay, some stanzas of his on Spring, written when he was only thirteen, having been printed in the *Monthly Magazine*, with his name and age attached.

With the prospect of marriage it was thought desirable that William should have some regular calling. Without, so far as appears, passing any examinations or obtaining any certificates, he bought the business of a chemist and druggist in Hanley, and thither, though with no intention of settling permanently in the Potteries, he took his bride as soon as the honeymoon was over. Only seven months were spent at Hanley, and in December, 1821, the couple were preparing to move to Nottingham, where William had bought the good-will of another chemist's business. But before settling down in their new home, the Howitts undertook a long pedestrian tour through Scotland and the north of



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England, in the course of which they explored the Rob Roy country, rambled through Fife, made acquaintance with the beauties of Edinburgh, looked in upon Robert Owen's model factories at New Lanark, got a glimpse of Walter Scott at Melrose, were mistaken for a runaway couple at Gretna Green, gazed reverently on Rydal Mount, and tramped in all no less than five hundred miles. An account of the tour was contributed to a Staffordshire paper under the title of *A Scottish Ramble in the Spring of 1822*, by Wilfrid and Wilfreda Wendle.

It was not until August, 1822, that the pair established themselves in a little house at Nottingham. Of the chemist's business we hear practically nothing in Mary's narrative, but a great deal about the literary enterprises in which husband and wife collaborated. They began by collecting the poems, of which each had a large number ready written, and, in fear and trembling, prepared to submit them to the verdict of critics and public. 'It seems strange to me,' wrote Mary, when she informed her sister of this modest venture, 'and I cannot reconcile myself to the thought of seeing my own name staring me in the face in every bookseller's window, or being pointed at and peeped after as a writer of verses.' In April, 1823, *The Forest Minstrel and other Poems*, by William and Mary Howitt, made its appearance in a not particularly appreciative world. The verses were chiefly descriptive of country sights and sounds, and had been produced, as stated in the Preface, 'not for the sake of writing, but for the indulgence of our own overflowing feelings.' The little book created no sensation, but it was kindly noticed, and seems to have attracted a few quiet readers who, like the writers, were lovers of nature and simplicity.

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During these early years at Nottingham the Howitts kept up, as far as their opportunities allowed, with the thought and literature of their day, and never relaxed their anxious efforts after 'mental improvement.' William's brother, Richard, himself a budding poet, was at this time an inmate of the little household, which was increased in 1824 by the birth of a daughter, Anna Mary. Although the couple still remained in the Quaker fold, they were gradually discarding the peculiar dress and speech of the 'plain' Friends. They were evidently regarded as terribly 'advanced' young people in their own circle, and shocked many of their old acquaintances by the catholicity of their views, by their admiration of Byron and Shelley, and by the liberal tone of their own productions. Like most of the lesser writers of that day, they found their way into the popular Keepsakes and Annuals, which Mary accurately describes as 'a chaffy, frivolous, and unsatisfactory style of publication, that only serves to keep a young author in the mind of the public, and to bring in a little cash.' In 1826 Mrs. Howitt was preparing for the press a new volume of poems by herself and her husband, *The Desolation of Eyam*, and in a letter to her sister, now transformed into Mrs. Daniel Wilson, she describes her sensations while awaiting the ordeal of critical judgment, and expresses her not very flattering opinion of the contemporary reviewer.

'Nobody that has not published,' she observes, 'can tell the almost painful excitement which the first opinions occasion. Really, for some days I was quite nervous. William boasted of possessing his mind in wise passivity, and truly his imperturbable patience was quite an annoyance; I therefore got Rogers's beautiful

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poem on Italy to read, and so diverted my thoughts. Everything in the literary world is done by favour and connections. It is a miracle to me how our former volume, when we were quite unknown, got favourably noticed. In many cases a book is reviewed which has never been read, or even seen externally.'

By this time the young authors who, to use Mary's own phrase, hungered and thirsted after acquaintances who were highly gifted in mind or profound in knowledge, had acquired one or two literary friends and correspondents, among them Mrs. Hemans, Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, and the Alaric Watts's of Keepsake fame. An occasional notice of the Howitts and their little household may be found in contemporary works by forgotten writers. For example, Sir Richard Phillips, in the section devoted to Nottingham of his quaintly-worded *Personal Tour through the United Kingdom* (1828), observes: 'Of Messrs. Howitt, husband and wife, conjugal in love and poetry, it would be vain for me to speak. Their tasteful productions belong to the nation as well as to Nottingham. As a man of taste Mr. Howitt married a lady of taste; and with rare amiability they have jointly cultivated the Muses, and produced some volumes of poetry, consisting of pieces under their separate names. The circumstance afforded a topic for ridicule to some of those anonymous critics who abuse the press and disgrace literature; but no one ventured to assail their productions.' Spencer Hall, a fellow-townsmen, became acquainted with the Howitts in 1829, and in his *Reminiscences* describes William as a bright, neat, quick, dapper man of medium height, with a light complexion, blue eyes, and brisk, cheery speech. Mary, he tells us, was always neatly dressed,

but with nothing prim or sectarian in her style. ‘Her expression was frank and free, yet very modest, and she was blessed with an affectionate, sociable spirit.’

A presentation copy of *The Desolation of Eyam* was sent to the Howitts’ favourite poet, Wordsworth, who, in acknowledging their ‘elegant volume,’ declared that, though he had only had time to turn over the leaves, he had found several poems which had already afforded him no small gratification. The harmless little book was denounced by the *Eclectic Review* as ‘anti-Quakerish, atheistical, and licentious in style and sentiment,’ but the authors were consoled by a charming little notice of their contributions to the *Annals* in the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* for November, 1828. ‘Who are these three brothers and sisters, the Howitts, sir?’ asks the Shepherd of Christopher North, in the course of a discussion of the Christmas gift-books, ‘whose names I see in the advertisements?’

*North*. I don’t know, James. It runs in my head that they are Quakers. Richard and William seem amiable and ingenious men, and Sister Mary writes beautifully.

*Shepherd*. What do you mean by beautifully? That’s vague.

*North*. Her language is chaste and simple, her feelings tender and pure, and her observation of nature accurate and intense. Her ‘Sketches from Natural History’ in the *Christmas Box* have much of the moral—nay, rather the religious spirit—that permeates all Wordsworth’s smaller poems, however light and slight the subject, and show that Mary Howitt is not only well-read in the book of Bewick, but also in the book from which Bewick has borrowed all—glorious plagiarist—and every other inspired zoologist—

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*Shepherd. The Book o' Natur'.*

The great event of 1829 for the Howitts was a visit to London, where they were the guests of Alaric and Zillah Watts, with whom they had long maintained a paper friendship. 'What wilt thou say, dear Anna,' writes Mary in December, 'when I tell thee that William and I set out for London the day after to-morrow. I half dread it. I shall wish twenty times for our quiet fireside, where day by day we read and talk by ourselves, and nobody looks in upon us. I keep reasoning with myself that the people we shall see in London are but men and women, and perhaps, after all, no better than ourselves. If we could but divest our minds of *self*, as our dear father used to say we should do, it would be better and more comfortable for us. Yet it is one of the faults peculiar to us Bothams that, with all the desire there was to make us regardless of self, we never had confidence and proper self-respect instilled into us, and the want of this gives us a depressing feeling, though I hope it is less seen by others than by ourselves. . . . We do not intend to stay more than a week, and thou may believe we shall have enough to do. We have to make special calls on the Carter Halls, Dr. Bowring, and the Pringles, and are to be introduced to their ramifications of acquaintance. Allan Cunningham, L. E. L., and Thomas Roscoe we are sure to see.'

In Miss Landon's now forgotten novel, *Romance and Reality*, there is a little sketch of Mary Howitt as she appeared at a literary *soirée*, during her brief visit to London. The heroine, Miss Arundel, is being initiated into the mysteries of the writing world by her friend, Mrs. Sullivan, when her attention is arrested by the sight of 'a female in a Quaker's dress—the quiet, dark

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silk dress—the hair simply parted on the forehead—the small, close cap—the placid, subdued expression of the face, were all in strong contrast to the crimsons, yellows, and blues around. The general character of the large, soft eyes seemed sweetness; but they were now lighted up with an expression of intelligent observation—that clear, animated, and comprehensive glance which shows it analyses what it observes. You looked at her with something of the sensation with which, while travelling along a dusty road, the eye fixes on some green field, where the hour flings its sunshine and the tree its shadow, as if its pure fresh beauty was a thing apart from the soil and tumult of the highway. “You see,” said Mrs. Sullivan, “one who, in a brief interview, gave me more the idea of a poet than most of our modern votaries of the lute. . . . She is as creative in her imaginary poems as she is touching and true in her simpler ones.”

Though there were still giants upon the earth in those far-off days, the general standard of literary taste was by no means exalted, a fact which Mary Howitt could hardly be expected to realise. She seems to have taken the praises lavished on her simple verses over-seriously, and to have imagined herself in very truth a poet. She was more clear-sighted where the work of her fellow-scribes was concerned, and in a letter written about this time, she descants upon the dearth of good literature in a somewhat disillusioned vein. After expressing her desire that some mighty spirit would rise up and give an impulse to poetry, she continues: ‘I am tired of Sir Walter Scott and his imitators, and I am sickened of Mrs. Hemans’s luscious poetry, and all her tribe of copyists. The libraries set in array one school

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against another, and hurry out the trashy volumes before the ink of the manuscript is fairly dry. Dost thou remember the days when Byron's poems first came out, now one and then another, at sufficient intervals to allow of digesting them? And dost thou remember our first reading of *Lalla Rookh*? It was on a washing-day. We read and clapped our clear-starching, read and clapped, and read again, and all the time our souls were not on this earth.'

There was one book then in course of preparation which Mary thought worthy to have been read, even in those literary clear-starching days. 'Thou hast no idea,' she assures her sister, 'how very interesting William's work, now called *A Book of the Seasons*, has become. It contains original sketches on every month, with every characteristic of the season, and a garden department which will fill thy heart brimful of all garden delights, greenness, and boweriness. Mountain scenery and lake scenery, meadows and woods, hamlets, farms, halls, storm and sunshine—all are in this most delicious book, grouped into a most harmonious whole.' Unfortunately, publishers were hard to convince of the merits of the new work, the first of William Howitt's rural series, and it was declined by four houses in turn. The author at last suggested that a stone should be tied to the unlucky manuscript, and that it should be flung over London Bridge; but his wife was not so easily disheartened. She was certain that the book was a worthy book, and only needed to be made a little more 'personable' to find favour in the eyes of a publisher. Accordingly, blotted sheets were hastily re-copied, new articles introduced, and passages of dubious interest omitted, husband and wife working together at

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this remodelling until their fingers ached and their eyes were as dim as an owl's in sunshine. Their labours were rewarded by the acceptance of the work by Bentley and Colburn, and its triumphant success with both critics and public, seven editions being called for in the first few months of its career.

'Prig it and pocket it,' says Christopher North, alluding to the *Book of the Seasons* in the *Noctes* for April, 1831. 'Tis a jewel.'

'Is Nottingham far intil England, sir? asks the simple Shepherd, to whom the above advice is given. 'For I would really like to pay the Hooits a visit this simmer. Thae Quakers are what we micht scarcely opine frae first principles, a maist poetical Christian seck. . . . The twa married Hooits I love just excessively, sir. What they write canna fail o' being poetry, even the most middlin' o't, for it's aye wi' them the ebullition o' their ain feeling and their ain fancy, and whenever that's the case, a bonny word or twa will drap itself intil ilka stanzy, and a sweet stanzy or twa intil ilka pome, and sae they touch, and sae they win a body's heart.'

The year 1831 was rendered memorable to the Howitts, not only by their first literary success, but also by an unexpected visit from their poetical idol, Mr. Wordsworth. The poet, his wife and daughter, were on their way home from London when Mrs. Wordsworth was suddenly taken ill, and was unable to proceed farther than Nottingham. Her husband, in great perplexity, came to ask advice of the Howitts, who insisted that the invalid should be removed to their house, where she remained for ten days before she was able to continue her journey. Wordsworth himself was only able to stay



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one night, but in that short time he made a very favourable impression upon his host and hostess. 'He is worthy of being the author of *The Excursion*, *Ruth*, and those sweet poems so full of human sympathy,' writes Mary. 'He is a kind man, full of strong feeling and sound judgment. My greatest delight was that he seemed so pleased with William's conversation. They seemed quite in their element, pouring out their eloquent sentiments on the future prospects of society, and on all subjects connected with poetry and the interests of man. Nor are we less pleased with Mrs. Wordsworth and her lovely daughter, Dora. They are the most grateful people; everything that we do for them is right, and the very best it can be.'

During the next two or three years Mary produced a volume of dramatic sketches, called *The Seven Temptations*, which she always regarded as her best and most original work, but which was damned by the critics and neglected by the public; a little book of natural history for children; and a novel in three volumes, called *Wood Leighton*, which seems to have had some success. *The Seven Temptations*, it must be owned, is a rather lugubrious production, probably inspired by Joanna Baillie's *Plays on the Passions*. The scene of *Wood Leighton* is laid at Uttoxeter, and the book is not so much a connected tale as a series of sketches descriptive of scenes and characters in and about the author's early home. It is evident that Mrs. Botham and Sister Anna looked somewhat disapprovingly upon so much literary work for the mistress of a household, since we find Mary writing in eager defence of her chosen calling.

'I want to make thee, and more particularly dear

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mother, see,' she explains, 'that I am not out of my line of duty in devoting myself so much to literary occupation. Just lately things were sadly against us. Dear William could not sleep at night, and the days were dark and gloomy. Altogether, I was at my wits' end. I turned over in my mind what I could do next, for till William's *Rural Life* was finished we had nothing available. Then I bethought myself of all those little verses and prose tales that for years I had written for the juvenile Annuals. It seemed probable I might turn them to some account. In about a week I had nearly all the poetry copied; and then who should come to Nottingham but John Darton [a Quaker publisher]. He fell into the idea immediately, took what I had copied up to London with him, and I am to have a hundred and fifty guineas for them. Have I not reason to feel that in thus writing I was fulfilling a duty?'

In 1833 William Howitt's *History of Priestcraft* appeared, a work which was publicly denounced at the Friends' yearly meeting, all good Quakers being cautioned not to read it. William hitherto had lived in great retirement at Nottingham, but he was now claimed by the Radical and Nonconformist members of the community as their spokesman and champion. In January, 1834, he and Joseph Gilbert (husband of Ann Gilbert of *Original Poems* fame) were deputed to present to the Prime Minister, Lord Grey, a petition from Nottingham for the disestablishment of the Church of England. The Premier regretted that he could not give his support to such a sweeping measure, which would embarrass the Ministry, alarm both Houses of Parliament, and startle the nation. He declared his intention of

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standing by the Church to the best of his ability, believing it to be the sacred duty of Government to maintain an establishment of religion. To which sturdy William Howitt replied that to establish one sect in preference to another was to establish a party and not a religion.

Civic duties, together with the excitements of local politics, proved a sad hindrance to literary work, and in 1836 the Howitts, who had long been yearning for a wider intellectual sphere, decided to give up the chemist's business, and settle in the neighbourhood of London. Their friends, the Alaric Watts's, who were living at Thames Ditton, found them a pretty little house at Esher, where they would be able to enjoy the woods and heaths of rural Surrey, and yet be within easy reach of publishers and editors in town. Before settling down in their new home, the Howitts made a three months' tour in the north, with a view to gathering materials for William's book on *Rural England*. They explored the Yorkshire dales, stayed with the Wordsworths at Rydal, and made a pilgrimage to the haunts of their favourite, Thomas Bewick, in Northumberland. Crossing the Border they paid a delightful visit to Edinburgh, where they were made much of by the three literary cliques of the city, the Blackwood and Wilson set, the Tait set, and the Chambers set.

'Immediately after our arrival,' relates Mary, 'a public dinner was given to Campbell the poet, at which the committee requested my husband's attendance, and that he would take a share in the proceedings of the evening by proposing as a toast, "Wordsworth, Southey, and Moore." This was our first introduction to Professor Wilson (Christopher North) and his family. I sat in

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the gallery with Mrs. Wilson and her daughters, one of whom was engaged to Professor Ferrier. We could not but remark the wonderful difference, not only in the outer man, but in the whole character of mind and manner, between Professor Wilson and Campbell—the one so hearty, outspoken, and joyous, the other so petty and trivial.’

Robert Chambers constituted himself the Howitts’ cicerone in Edinburgh, showing them every place of interest, and presenting them to every person of note, including Mrs. Macle hose (the Clarinda of Burns), and William Miller, the Quaker artist and engraver, as intense a nature-worshipper as themselves. From Edinburgh they went to Glasgow, where they took ship for the Western Isles. Their adventures at Staffa and Iona, their voyage up the Caledonian Canal, and the remainder of their experiences on this tour, were afterwards described by William Howitt in his *Visits to Remarkable Places*.

### PART II

IN September, 1836, the Howitts took possession of their Surrey home, West End Cottage, an old-fashioned dwelling, with a large garden, an orchard, a meadow by the river Mole, and the right of boating and fishing to the extent of seven miles. The new life opened with good prospects of literary and journalistic employment, William Howitt’s political writings having already attracted attention from several persons of power and influence in the newspaper world. On December 3 of this year, Mary wrote to inform her sister that, ‘In

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consequence of an article that William wrote on Dymond's *Christian Morality*, Joseph Hume, the member for Middlesex, wrote to him, and has opened a most promising connection for him with a new Radical newspaper, *The Constitutional*. O'Connell seems determined to make him the editor of the *Dublin Review*, and wrote him a most kind letter, which has naturally promoted his interest with the party. I cannot but see the hand of Providence in our leaving Nottingham. All has turned out admirably.'

Unfortunately for these sanguine anticipations, the newspaper connections on which the Howitts depended for a livelihood, now that the despised chemist's business had been given up, proved but hollow supports. O'Connell had overlooked the trifling fact that a Quaker editor was hardly fitted to conduct a journal that was emphatically and polemically Catholic; and though he considered that William Howitt was admirably adapted to deal with literary and political topics, he was obliged to withdraw his offer of the editorship. A more crushing disappointment arose out of the engagement on *The Constitutional*. Mr. Howitt, according to his wife, did more for the paper than any other member of the staff. 'He worked and wrote like any slave,' she tells her sister. 'In the end, after a series of the most harassing and vexatious conduct on the part of the newspaper company, he was swindled out of every farthing. Oh, it was a most mortifying and humiliating thing to see men professing liberal and honest principles act so badly. A month ago, when in the very depths of discouragement and low spirits, I set about a little volume for Darton, to be called *Birds and Flowers*, and have pretty nearly finished it. William, in the mean-

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time, has finished his *Rural Life*, and sold the first edition to Longman's.'

The manager of the unlucky paper was Major Carmichael Smith, who, when matters grew desperate, sent for his step-son, Thackeray, then acting as Paris correspondent for a London daily. 'Just as I was going out of the office one day,' writes William, 'I met on the stairs a tall, thin young man, in a dark blue coat, and with a nose that seemed to have had a blow that had flattened the bridge. I turned back, and had some conversation with him, being anxious to know how he proposed to carry on a paper which was without any funds, and already deeply in debt. He did not seem to know any more than I did. I thought to myself that his step-father had not done him much service in taking him from a profitable post for the vain business of endeavouring to buoy up a desperate speculation. How much longer *The Constitutional* struggled on, I know not. That was the first time I ever saw or heard of William Makepeace Thackeray.'

The Howitts were somewhat consoled for their journalistic losses by the triumphant success of *Rural Life in England*. The reading public which, during the previous century, had swallowed mock pastorals, made in Fleet Street, with perfect serenity, was now, thanks to the slowly-working influence of Wordsworth and the other Lake poets, prepared for a renaissance of nature and simplicity in prose. Miss Mitford's exquisite work had given them a distaste for the 'jewelled turf,' the 'silver streams,' and 'smiling valleys' which constituted the rustic stock-in-trade of the average novelist; and they eagerly welcomed a book that treated with accuracy and observation of the real country. William Howitt's

straightforward, undistinguished style was acceptable enough in an age when even men of genius seem to have written fine prose without knowing it, and tripped up not infrequently over the subtleties of English grammar. His lack of imagination and humour was more than atoned for, in the uncritical eyes of the 'thirties,' by the easy loquacity of his rural gossip, and the varied information with which he crammed his pages. The Nature of those days was a simple, transparent creature, with but small resemblance to the lady of moods, mystery, and passion who is so overworked in our modern literature. No one dreamt of going into hysterics over the veining of a leaf, or penning a rhapsody on the outline of a rain-cloud; nor could it yet be said that, 'if everybody must needs blab of the favours that have been done him by roadside, and river-brink, and woodland walk, as if to kiss and tell were no longer treachery, it will soon be a positive refreshment to meet a man who is as superbly indifferent to Nature as she is to him.'<sup>1</sup>

The Howitts took great delight in the pleasant Surrey country, so different from the dreary scenery around Nottingham, and Mary's letters contain many descriptions of the woods and commons and shady lanes through which the family made long expeditions in a little carriage drawn by Peg, their venerable pony. Driving one day to Hook, they met Charles Dickens, then best known as 'Boz,' in one of his long tramps, with Harrison Ainsworth as his companion. When Dickens's next work, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, appeared, the Howitts were amused to see that their stout and wilful Peg had not escaped the novelist's keen eye, but had been pressed into service for Mr. Garland's chaise.

<sup>1</sup> Lowell.

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On another occasion, in July 1841, William, while driving with a friend, was attacked by two handsome, dark-eyed girls, dressed in gipsy costume, who ran one on each side of the carriage, begging that the kind gentleman would give them sixpence, as they were poor strangers who had taken nothing all day. Mr. Howitt, who had made a special study of the gipsy tribe, perceived in an instant that these were only sham Romanys. He paid no attention to their pleading, but observed that he hoped they would enjoy their frolic, and only wished that he were as rich as they. Subsequently, he discovered that the mock-gipsies, who had been unable to coax a sixpence out of him, were none other than the beautiful Sheridan sisters, the Duchess of Somerset, and Mrs. Blackwood (afterwards Lady Dufferin), whose husband had lately taken Bookham Lodge.

During the four years spent at Esher, Mary seems to have been too much occupied with the cares of a young family to use her pen to much purpose. She produced little, except a volume of *Hymns and Fireside Verses*, but she frequently assisted her husband in his work. William, industrious as ever, published, besides a large number of newspaper articles, his *Boys' Country Book*, the best work of the kind ever written, according to the *Quarterly Review*; and his *History of Colonisation and Christianity*, in which he took a rapid survey of the behaviour of the Christian nations of Europe to the inhabitants of the countries they conquered in all parts of the world. It was the reading of this book that led Mr. Joseph Pease to establish the British India Society, which issued, in a separate form, the portion of the work that related to India. Mr. Howitt next set to work upon another topographical volume, his *Visits to Remark-*



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*able Places*, in which he turned to good account the materials collected in his pedestrian rambles about the country.

In 1840 the question of education for the elder children became urgent, and the Howitts, who had heard much of the advantages of a residence in Germany from their friends, Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Jameson, and Henry Chorley, decided to give up their cottage at Esher, and spend two or three years at Heidelberg. Letters of introduction from Mrs. Jameson gave them the *entrée* into German society, which they found more to their taste than that of their native land. ‘For the sake of our children,’ writes Mary, ‘we sought German acquaintances, we read German, we followed German customs. The life seemed to me easier, the customs simpler and less expensive than in England. There was not the same feverish thirst after wealth as with us; there was more calm appreciation of nature, of music, of social enjoyment.’ In their home on the Neckar, the Howitts, most adaptable of couples, found new pleasures and new amusements with each season of the year. In the spring and summer they explored the surrounding country, wandered through the deep valleys and woods, where the grass was purple with bilberries, visited quaint, half-timbered homesteads, standing in the midst of ancient orchards, or followed the swift-flowing streams, on whose banks the peasant girls in their picturesque costumes were washing and drying linen. In the autumn the whole family turned out on the first day of the vintage, and worked like their neighbours. ‘It was like something Arcadian,’ wrote Mary when recalling the scene. ‘The tubs and baskets piled up with enormous clusters, the men and women carrying them away

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on their heads to the place where they were being crushed ; the laughter, the merriment, the feasting, the firing—for they make as much noise as they can—all was delightful, to say nothing of the masquerading and dancing in the evening, which we saw, though we did not take part in it.' In the winter the strangers were introduced to the Christmas Tree, which had not yet become a British institution : while with the first snow came the joys of sleighing, when wheel-barrows, tubs, baskets, everything that could be put on runners, were turned into sledges, and the boys were in their glory.

During the three years that were spent at Heidelberg, William Howitt wrote his *Student Life in Germany*, *German Experiences*, and *Rural and Domestic Life in Germany*, works which contain a great deal of more or less valuable information about the country and the people, presented in a homely, unpretentious style. Mary was no less industrious, having struck a new literary vein, the success of which was far to surpass her modest anticipations. 'I have been very busy,' she writes in 1842, 'translating the first volume of a charming work by Frederica Bremer, a Swedish writer ; and if any publisher will give me encouragement to go on with it, I will soon complete the work. It is one of a series of stories of everyday life in Sweden—a beautiful book, full of the noblest moral lessons for every man and woman.' In the summer of 1841 the Howitts, accompanied by their elder daughter, Anna, made a long tour through Germany and Austria, in the course of which they collected materials for fresh works, and visited the celebrities, literary and artistic, of the various cities that lay in their route. At Stuttgart they called on

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Gustav Schwab, the poet, and visited Dannecker's studio; at Tübingen they made the acquaintance of Uhland, and at Munich that of Kaulbach, then at the height of his fame. By way of Vienna and Prague they travelled to Dresden, where, through the good offices of Mrs. Jameson, they were received by Moritz Retzsch, whose *Outlines* they had long admired. At Berlin they made friends with Tieck, on whom the king had bestowed a pension and a house at Potsdam; while at Weimar they were entertained by Frau von Goethe, whose son, Wolfgang, had been one of their earliest acquaintances at Heidelberg. This interesting tour is described at length in the *Rural and Domestic Life of Germany*.

Another year was spent at Heidelberg, but the difficulties of arranging the business details of their work at such a distance from publishers and editors, brought the industrious couple back to London in the spring of 1843. 'On our return to England,' writes Mary, 'I was full of energy and hope. Glowing with aspiration, and in enjoyment of great domestic happiness, I was anticipating a busy, perhaps overburdened, but, nevertheless, congenial life. It was to be one of darkness, perplexity, discouragement.' The Howitts had scarcely entered into possession of a new house that they had taken at Clapton, when news came from Heidelberg, where the elder children had been left at school, that their second son, Claude, had developed alarming symptoms of disease in the knee-joint. It was known that he had been slightly injured in play a few weeks before, but no danger had been anticipated. Mr. Howitt at once set out for Heidelberg, and returned with the invalid, on whose case Liston was consulted. The great

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surgeon counselled amputation, but to this the parents refused their consent, except as a last resource. Various less heroic modes of treatment were tried, but poor Claude faded away, and died in March, 1844, aged only ten years and a half. This was the heaviest trial that the husband and wife had yet experienced, for Claude had been a boy of brilliant promise, whom they regarded as the flower of their flock. Only a few months before his accident his mother had written in the pride of her heart: 'Claude is the naughtiest of all the children, and yet the most gifted. He learns anything at a glance. Claude is born to be fortunate; he is one that will make the family distinguished in the next generation. He has an extraordinary faculty for telling stories, either of his own invention or of what he reads.'

A lesser cause of trouble and anxiety arose out of the translation of Miss Bremer's novels. 'When we first translated *The Neighbours*,' writes Mary, 'there was not a house in London that would undertake its publication. We published it and the other Bremer novels at our own risk, but such became the rage for them that our translations were seized by a publisher, altered, and reissued as new ones.' The success of these books was said to be greater than that of any series since the first appearance of the Waverley novels. Cheap editions were multiplied in the United States, and even the boys who hawked the books about the streets were to be seen deep in *The Home* or *The H. Family*. In a letter to her sister written about this time, Mary expatiates on the annoyance and loss caused by these piracies. 'It is very mortifying,' she observes, 'because no one knew of these Swedish novels till we introduced them. It obliges us to hurry in all we do, and we must work

almost day and night to get ours out in order that we may have some little chance. . . . We have embarked a great deal of money in the publication, and the interference of the upstart London publisher is most annoying. Mlle. Bremer, however, has written a new novel, and sends it to us before publication. We began its translation this week, and hope to be able to publish it about the time it will appear in Sweden and Germany.'

In addition to her translating work, Mrs. Howitt was engaged at this time upon a series of little books, called *Tales for the People and their Children*, which had been commissioned by a cheap publisher. These stories, each of which illustrated a domestic virtue, were punctually paid for; and though they were never advertised, they passed swiftly through innumerable editions, and have been popular with a certain public down to quite recent times. Perhaps the most attractive is the *Autobiography of a Child*, in which Mary told the story of her own early days in her pretty, simple style, with the many little quaint touches that gave all her juvenile stories an atmosphere of truth and reality. Her quick sympathy with young people, and her knowledge of what most appealed to the childish mind, was probably due to her vivid remembrance of her own youthful days, and to her affectionate study of the 'little ways' of her own children. Many are the original traits and sayings that she reports to her sister, more especially those of her youngest boy, Charlton, who had inherited his parents' naturalistic tastes in a pronounced form, and preferred the Quakers' meeting-house to any other church or chapel, because there was a dog-kennel on the premises!

About a year after her return to England, Mrs. Howitt turned her attention to Danish literature,

finding that, with her knowledge of Swedish and German, the language presented few difficulties. In 1845 she translated Hans Andersen's *Improvisatore*, greatly to the satisfaction of the author, who begged that she would continue to translate his works, till he was as well known and loved in England as he was on the Continent. Appreciation, fame, and joy, declared the complacent poet, followed his footsteps wherever he went, and his whole life was full of sunshine, like a beautiful fairy-tale. Mary translated his *Only a Fiddler*; *O. T., or Life in Denmark*; *The True Story of My Life*; and several of the *Wonderful Stories for Children*. The *Improvisatore* was the only one that went into a second edition, the other works scarcely paying the cost of publication. Hans Andersen, however, being assured that Mrs. Howitt was making a fortune of the translations, came to England in 1847 to arrange for a share of the profits. Though disappointed in his hope of gain, he begged Mrs. Howitt to translate the whole of his fairy-tales, which had just been brought out in a beautifully-illustrated German edition. Much to her after regret, she was then too much engrossed by other work to be able to accede to his proposal. The relations between Hans Andersen and his translator were marred, we are told, by the extreme sensitiveness and egoism of the Dane. Mrs. Howitt narrates, as an example of his childish vanity, the following little incident which occurred during his visit to England in the summer of 1847:—

‘We had taken him, as a pleasant rural experience, to the annual hay-making at Hillside, Highgate, thus introducing him to an English home, full of poetry and art, sincerity, and affection. The ladies of Hillside—

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Miss Mary and Margaret Gillies, the one an embodiment of peace and an admirable writer, whose talent, like the violet, kept in the shade; the other, the warm-hearted painter—made him welcome. . . . Immediately after our arrival, the assembled children, loving his delightful fairy-tales, clustered round him in the hay-field, and watched him make them a pretty device of flowers; then, feeling somehow that the stiff, silent foreigner was not kindred to themselves, stole off to an American, Henry Clarke Wright, whose admirable little book, *A Kiss for a Blow*, some of them knew. He, without any suggestion of condescension or difference of age, entered heart and soul into their glee, laughed, shouted, and played with them, thus unconsciously evincing the gift which had made him earlier the exclusive pastor of six hundred children in Boston. Soon poor Andersen, perceiving himself neglected, complained of headache, and insisted on going indoors, whither Mary Gillies and I, both anxious to efface any disagreeable impression, accompanied him; but he remained irritable and out of sorts.'

It was in 1845 or 1846 that the Howitts made the acquaintance of Tennyson, whose poetry they had long admired. 'The retiring and meditative young poet, Alfred Tennyson, visited us,' relates Mary, 'and cheered our seclusion by the recitation of his exquisite poetry. He spent a Sunday night at our house, when we sat talking together till three in the morning. All the next day he remained with us in constant converse. We seemed to have known him for years. So in fact we had, for his poetry was himself. He hailed all attempts at heralding a grander, more liberal state of public opinion, and consequently sweeter, nobler modes of

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living. He wished that we Englishers could dress up our affections in more poetical costume; real warmth of heart would gain rather than lose by it. As it was, our manners were as cold as the walls of our churches.' Another new friend was gained through William Howitt's book, *Visits to Remarkable Places*. When the work was announced as 'in preparation,' the author received a letter, signed E. C. Gaskell, drawing his attention to a beautiful old house, Clopton Hall, near Stratford-on-Avon. The letter described in such admirable style the writer's visit to the house as a schoolgirl, that William wrote to suggest that she ought to use her pen for the public benefit. This timely encouragement led to the production of *Mary Barton*, the first volume of which was sent in manuscript for Mr. Howitt's verdict. A few months later Mrs. Gaskell came as a guest to the little house at Clopton, bringing with her the completed work.

In 1846 William Howitt took part in a new journalistic venture, his wife, as usual, sharing his labours and anxieties. He became first contributor, and afterwards editor and part-proprietor of the *People's Journal*, a cheap weekly, through the medium of which he hoped to improve the moral and intellectual condition of the working classes. 'The bearing of its contents,' wrote Mary, in answer to some adverse criticism of the new paper, 'is love to God and man. There is no attempt to set the poor against the rich, but, on the contrary, to induce them to be careful, prudent, sober and independent; above all, to be satisfied to be workers, and to regard labour as a privilege rather than as a penalty, which is quite our view of the matter.' The combination of business and philanthropy seldom answers, and



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the Howitts, despite the excellence of their intentions, were unlucky in their newspaper speculations. At the end of a few months it was discovered that the manager of the *People's Journal* kept no books, and that the affairs of the paper were in hopeless confusion. William Howitt, finding himself responsible for the losses on the venture, tried to cure the evil by a hair of the dog that had bitten him. He withdrew from the *People's Journal*, and, with Samuel Smiles as his assistant, started a rival paper on the same lines, called *Howitt's Journal*. But, as Ebenezer Elliott, the shrewd old Quaker, remarked, apropos of the apathy of the working-class public: 'Men engaged in a death struggle for bread will pay for amusement when they will not for instruction. They woo laughter to unscare them, that they may forget their perils, their wrongs, and their oppressors. If you were able and willing to fill the journal with fun, it would pay.' The failure of his paper spelt ruin to its promoter; his copyrights, as well as those of his wife, were sacrificed, and he was obliged to begin the world anew.

The Howitts seem to have kept up their spirits bravely under this reverse, and never for a moment relaxed in their untiring industry. They moved into a small house in Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, and looked around them for new subjects upon which to exercise their well-worn pens. Mary hoped to get employment from the Religious Tract Society, which had invited her to send in a specimen story, but she feared that her work would hardly be considered sufficiently orthodox, though she had introduced one of the 'death-bed scenes,' which were then in so much request. As she anticipated, the story was returned as quite

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unsuitable, and thereupon she writes to her sister in some depression : ‘Times are so bad that publishers will not speculate in books ; and when I have finished the work I am now engaged on, I have nothing else certain to go on with.’ However, writers so popular with the public as the Howitts were not likely to be left long without employment. Mary seems to have been the greater favourite of the two, and the vogue of her volume of collected *Poems and Ballads*, which appeared in 1847, strikes the modern reader with amazement.

Some idea of the estimation in which she was then held is proved by Allan Cunningham’s dictum that ‘Mary Howitt has shown herself mistress of every string of the minstrel’s lyre, save that which sounds of broil and bloodshed. There is more of the old ballad simplicity in her composition than can be found in the strains of any living poet besides.’ Another critic compared Mrs. Howitt’s ballads to those of Lord Macaulay, while Mrs. Alaric Watts, in her capacity of Annual editor, wrote to assure her old friend and contributor that, ‘In thy simplest poetry there are sometimes turns so exquisite as to bring the tears to my eyes. Thou hast as much poetry in thee as would set up half-a-dozen writers.’ The one dissentient voice among admiring contemporaries is that of Miss Mitford, who writes in 1852 : ‘I am for my sins so fidgety respecting style that I have the bad habit of expecting a book that pretends to be written in our language to be English ; therefore I cannot read Miss Strickland, or the Howitts, or Carlyle, or Emerson, or the serious parts of Dickens.’ It must be owned that the Howitts are condemned in fairly good company.

The work of both husband and wife suffered from

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the inevitable defects of self-education, and also from the narrowness and seclusion of their early lives. Mary possessed more imagination and a lighter touch than her husband, but her attempts at adult fiction were hampered by her ignorance of the world, while her technique, both in prose and verse, left something to be desired. It is evident that the publishers and editors of the period were less critical than Miss Mitford, for, in 1848, we find that Mrs. Howitt was invited to write the opening volume of Bradshaw's series of Railway novels, while in February 1850, came a request from Charles Dickens for contributions to *Household Words*. 'You may have seen,' he writes, 'the first dim announcements of the new, cheap literary journal I am about to start. Frankly, I want to say to you that if you would write for it, you would delight me, and I should consider myself very fortunate indeed in enlisting your services. . . . I hope any connection with the enterprise would be satisfactory and agreeable to you in all respects, as I should most earnestly endeavour to make it. If I wrote a book I could say no more than I mean to suggest to you in these few lines. All that I leave unsaid, I leave to your generous understanding.'

The Howitts were keenly interested in the gradual awakening of the long-dormant, artistic instincts of the nation, the first signs of which became faintly visible about the end of the forties. 'Down to that time,' observes Mary, 'the taste of the English people had been for what appealed to the mind rather than to the eye, and the general public were almost wholly uneducated in art. By 1849 the improvement due to the exertions of the Prince Consort, the Society of Arts, and other powers began to be felt; while a wonderful impulse

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to human taste and ingenuity was being given in the preparation of exhibits for the World's Fair.' The gentle Quakeress who, in her youth, had modelled Wedgwood figures in paper pulp, and clapped her clear-starching to the rhythm of *Lalla Rookh*, was, in middle life, one of the staunchest supporters of the Pre-Raphaelite Brethren, and that at a time when the President of the Royal Academy had announced his intention of hanging no more of their 'outrageous productions.' Through their friend, Edward La Trobe Bateman, the Howitts had been introduced into the Pre-Raphaelite circle, and familiarised with the then new and startling idea that artistic principles might be carried out in furniture and house-decoration. Less than three-quarters of a century before, Mary's father had been sternly rebuked by her grandfather for painting a series of lines in black and grey above the parlour fire-place to represent a cornice. This primitive attempt at decoration was regarded as a sinful indulgence of the lust of the eye! With the simple charity that was characteristic of them, William and Mary saw only the best side of their new friends, the shadows of Bohemian life being entirely hidden from them. 'Earnest and severe in their principles of art,' observes Mrs. Howitt naively, 'the young reformers indulged in much jocundity when the day's work was done. They were wont to meet at ten, cut jokes, talk slang, smoke, read poetry, and discuss art till three A.M.'

The couple had by this time renounced their membership of the Society of Friends, but they had not joined any other religious sect, though they seem to have been attracted by Unitarian doctrines. 'Mere creeds,' wrote Mary to her sister, 'matter nothing to me. I could go

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one Sunday to the Church of England, another to a Catholic chapel, a third to the Unitarian, and so on; and in each of them find my heart warmed with Christian love to my fellow-creatures, and lifted up with gratitude and praise to God.' For many years the house in Avenue Road was, we are told, a meeting-place for all that was best and brightest in the world of modern thought and art. William Howitt was always ready to lend an attentive and unbiassed ear to the newest theory, or even the newest fad, while Mary possessed in the fullest degree the gift of companionableness, and her inexhaustible sympathy drew from others an instant confidence. Her arduous literary labours never impaired her vigorous powers of mind or body, and she often wrote till late into the night without appearing to suffer in either health or spirits. She is described as a careful and energetic housewife; indeed, her husband was accustomed to say that he would challenge any woman who never wrote a line, to match his own good woman in the management of a large household.

In 1851 came the first tidings of the discovery of gold in Australia, and nothing was talked of but this new Eldorado and the wonderful inducements held out to emigrants. William Howitt, who felt that he needed a change from brain-work, suddenly resolved on a trip with his two sons to this new world, where he would see his youngest brother, Dr. Godfrey Howitt, who had settled at Melbourne. He was also anxious to ascertain what openings in the country there might be for his boys, both of whom had active, outdoor tastes, which there seemed little chance of their being able to gratify in England. In June, 1852, the three

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male members of the family, accompanied by La Trobe Bateman, sailed for Australia, while Mary and her two daughters, the elder of whom had just returned from a year in Kaulbach's studio at Munich, moved into a cottage called the Hermitage, at Highgate, which belonged to Mr. Bateman, and had formerly been occupied by Rossetti. Here they lived quietly for upwards of two years, working at their literary or artistic occupations, and seeing a few intimate friends. Mary kept her husband posted up in the events that were taking place in England, and we learn from her letters what were the chief topics of town talk in the early fifties.

‘Now, I must think over what news there is,’ she writes in April, 1853. ‘In the political world, the proposed new scheme of Property and Income Tax, which would make everybody pay something; and the proposal for paying off a portion of the National Debt with Australian gold. In the literary world, the International Copyright, which some expect will be in force in three months. In society in general, the strange circumstantial rumour of the Queen's death, which, being set afloat on Easter Monday, when no business was doing, was not the offspring of the money market. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, who were here the other day, spoke of it, saying truly that for the moment it seemed to paralyse the very heart of England. . . . [May 4th.] The great talk now is Mrs. Beecher Stowe and spirit-rapping, both of which have arrived in England. The universality of the latter phenomena renders it a curious study. A feeling seems pervading all classes and all sects that the world stands on the brink of some great spiritual revelation. It meets one in books, in news-

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papers, on the lips of members of the Church of England, Unitarians, and even Freethinkers. Poor old Robert Owen, the philanthropist, has been converted, and made a confession of faith in public. One cannot but respect a man who, in his old age, has the boldness to declare himself as having been blinded and mistaken through life.'

In December, 1854, William Howitt returned from his travels without any gold in his pockets, but with the materials for his *History of Discovery in Australia and New Zealand*. Thanks to what he used to call his four great doctors, Temperance, Exercise, Good Air, and Good Hours, he had displayed wonderful powers of activity and endurance during his exploration of some almost untracked regions of the new world. At sixty years of age he had marched twenty miles a day under a blazing sun for weeks at a time, worked at digging gold for twelve hours a day, waded through rivers, slept under trees, baked his own bread, washed his own clothes, and now returned in the pink of condition, with his passion for wandering only intensified by his three years of an adventurous life. The family experiences were diversified thenceforward by frequent change of scene, for William was always ready and willing to start off at a moment's notice to the mountains, the seaside, or the Continent. But whether the Howitts were at home or abroad, they continued their making of many books, so that it becomes difficult for the biographer to keep pace with their literary output. Together or separately they produced a *History of Scandinavian Literature*, *The Homes and Haunts of the Poets*, a *Popular History of England*, which was published in weekly parts, a *Year-Book of the Country*, a *Popular History of the United States*,

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a *History of the Supernatural*, the *Northern Heights of London*, and an abridged edition of *Sir Charles Grandison*, besides several tales for young people, and contributions to magazines and newspapers.

Even increasing age had no power to narrow their point of view, or to blunt their sympathy with every movement that seemed to make for the relief of the oppressed, the welfare of the nation, or the advancement of the human race. Just as in youth they had championed the cause of Catholic Emancipation and of political Reform, so in later years we find them advocating the Repeal of the Corn Laws, taking part in the Anti-Slavery agitation, working for improvement in the laws that affected women and children, and supporting the Bill for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. A more debatable subject—that of spiritualism—was investigated by them in a friendly but impartial spirit. ‘In the spring of 1856,’ writes Mrs. Howitt, ‘we had become acquainted with several most ardent and honest spirit mediums. It seemed right to my husband and myself to try and understand the nature of these phenomena in which our new acquaintance so firmly believed. In the month of April I was invited to attend a *séance* at Professor de Morgan’s, and was much astonished and affected by communications purporting to come to me from my dear son Claude. With constant prayer for enlightenment and guidance, we experimented at home. The teachings that seemed given us from the spirit-world were often akin to those of the gospel; at other times they were more obviously emanations of evil. I felt thankful for the assurance thus gained of an invisible world, but resolved to neglect none of my common



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duties for spiritualism.' Among the Howitts' fellow-converts were Robert Chambers, Robert Owen, the Carter Halls and the Alaric Watts's; while Sir David Brewster and Lord Brougham were earnest inquirers into these forms of psychical phenomena.

In 1865 William Howitt was granted a pension by Government, and a year later the couple moved from Highgate to a cottage called the Orchard, near their former residence at Esher. Of their four surviving children, only Margaret, the youngest, was left at home. Anna, already the author of a very interesting book, *An Art Student at Munich*, had, as her mother observes, taken her place among the successful artists and writers of her day, 'when, in the spring of 1856, a severe private censure of one of her oil-paintings by a king among critics so crushed her sensitive nature, as to make her yield to her bias for the supernatural, and withdraw from the arena of the fine arts.' In 1857 Anna became the wife of Alfred Watts, the son of her parents' old friends, Alaric and Zillah Watts. The two boys, Alfred and Charlton, born explorers and naturalists, both settled in Australia. Alfred, early in the sixties, had explored the district of Lake Torrens, a land of parched deserts, dry-water-courses, and soda-springs, whose waters effervesced tartaric acid; and had opened up for the Victorian Government the mountainous district of Gippsland, with the famous gold-field of the Crooked River. In 1861 he had been employed to head the relief-party that went in search of the discoverer, Robert O'Hara Burke, and his companions, and a year later he brought back the remains of the ill-fated explorers to Melbourne for public burial. Later in life he was successfully employed in various Government enterprises, and pub-

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lished, in collaboration with a friend, a learned work on the aborigines of Australia.

Charlton Howitt, the younger son, after five years' uncongenial work in a London office, emigrated to Australia in 1860. His quality was quickly recognised by the Provincial Government, which, in 1862, appointed him to command an expedition to examine the rivers in the province of Canterbury, with a view to ascertaining whether they contained gold. So admirably was the work accomplished that, on his return to Christchurch, he was intrusted with the task of opening up communications between the Canterbury plains and the newly-discovered gold and coal district on the west coast. 'This duty was faithfully performed, under constant hardships and discouragement,' relates his mother. 'But a few miles of road remained to be cut, when, at the end of June, 1863, after personally rescuing other pioneers and wanderers from drowning and starvation in that watery, inhospitable forest region, Charlton, with two of his men, went down in the deep waters of Lake Brunner; a fatal accident which deprived the Government of a valued servant, and saddened the hearts of all who knew him.'

After four peaceful years at Esher, the *Wanderlust*, that gipsy spirit, which not even the burden of years could tame, took possession of William and Mary once more, and they suddenly decided that they must see Italy before they died. In May, 1870, they let the Orchard, and, aged seventy-seven and seventy-one respectively, set out on their last long flight into the world. The summer was spent on the Lake of Lucerne, where the old-world couple came across that modern of the moderns, Richard Wagner, and his

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family. By way of the Italian Lakes and Venice they travelled, in leisurely fashion, to Rome, where they celebrated their golden wedding in April, 1871. The Eternal City threw its glamour around these ancient pilgrims, who found both life and climate exactly suited to the needs of old age. 'I prized in Rome,' writes Mrs. Howitt, 'the many kind and sympathetic friends that were given to us, the ease of social existence, the poetry, the classic grace, the peculiar and deep pathos diffused around; above all, the stirring and affecting historic memories. . . . From the period of arrival in Rome, I may truly say that the promise in Scripture, "At evening time there shall be light," was, in our case, fulfilled.'

The simple, homely life of the aged couple continued unbroken amid their new surroundings. William interested himself in the planting of Eucalyptus in the Campagna, as a preventive against malaria, and had seeds of different varieties sent over from Australia, which he presented to the Trappist monks of the Tre Fontani. He helped to establish a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and struck up a friendship with the gardeners and custodians of the Pincio, to whom he gave expert advice on the subject of the creatures under their charge. The summer months were always spent in the Tyrol, where the Howitts had permanent quarters in an old mansion near Bruneck, called Mayr-am-Hof. Here William was able to indulge in his favourite occupation of gardening. He dug indefatigably in a field allotment with his English spade, a unique instrument in that land of clumsy husbandry, and was amazed at the growth of the New Zealand spinach, the widespread rhubarb,

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the exuberant tomatoes, and towering spikes of Indian corn. Thanks to the four great doctors before mentioned, he remained hale and hearty up to December, 1878, in which month he celebrated his eighty-seventh birthday. A few weeks later he was attacked by bronchitis, which, owing to an unsuspected weakness of the heart, he was unable to throw off. He died in his house on the Via Sistina, close to his favourite Pincio, on March 3, 1879.

Mrs. Howitt now finally gave up the idea of returning to end her days in England. Her husband and companion of more than fifty years was buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome, and when her time came, she desired to be laid by his side. The grant of a small pension added to the comfort of her last years, and was a source of much innocent pride and gratification, for, as she tells her daughter Anna, 'It was so readily given, so kindly, so graciously, for my literary merits, by Lord Beaconsfield, without the solicitation or interference of any friend or well-wisher.' In May, 1880, she writes to a friend from Meran about 'a project, which seems to have grown up in a wonderful way by itself, or as if invisible hands had been arranging it; that we should have a little home of our own *im heiligen Land Tirol*. This really is a very great mercy, seeing that the Tyrol is so beautiful, the climate so beneficial to health, and the people, taken as a whole, so very honest and devout. Our little nest of love, which we shall call "Marienruhe," will be perched on a hill with beautiful views, surrounded by a small garden.' On September 29, 1881, Mrs. Howitt and her daughter, Margaret, slept, for the first time, in their romantically-situated new home near Meran.

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At Marienruhe, the greater portion of the last seven years of Mary Howitt's life was spent in peace and contentment. Here she amused herself with writing her 'Reminiscences' for *Good Words*, which were afterwards incorporated in her *Autobiography*. Age had no power to blunt her interest in the events of the day, political or literary, and at eighty-seven we find her reading with keen enjoyment Froude's *Oceana* and Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, books that dealt with questions which she and her husband had had at heart for the best part of a lifetime, and for which they had worked with untiring zeal. Of the first she writes to a friend: 'We much approve of his (Froude's) very strong desire that our colonies should, like good, faithful, well-trained children, be staunch in love and service to old Mother England. How deeply we feel on this subject I cannot tell you; and I hope and trust that you join strongly in this truly English sentiment.' Of the second she writes to Mrs. Leigh Smith: 'I am more interested than I can tell you in *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*. It affects me like the perfected fruit of some glorious tree which my dear husband and I had a dim dream of planting more than thirty years ago, and which we did, in our ignorance and incapacity, attempt to plant in soil not properly prepared, and far too early in the season. I cannot tell you how it has recalled the hopes and dreams of a time which, by the overruling Providence of God, was so disastrous to us. It is a beautiful essay on the dignity of labour.'

The last few years of Mary Howitt's life were saddened by the deaths of her beloved sister, Anna, and her elder daughter, Mrs. Watts, but such blows are

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softened for aged persons by the consciousness that their own race is nearly run. Mary had, moreover, one great spiritual consolation in her conversion, at the age of eighty-three, to the doctrines of Roman Catholicism. In spite of her oft-repeated protestations against the likelihood of her 'going over,' in spite of her declaration, openly expressed as late as 1871, that she firmly believed in the anti-Christianity of the Papacy, and that she and her husband were watching with interest the progress of events which, they trusted, would bring about its downfall, Mrs. Howitt was baptized into the Roman Church in May, 1882. Her new faith was a source of intense happiness to the naturally religious woman, who had found no refuge in any sectarian fold since her renunciation of her childish creed. In 1888, the year of the Papal Jubilee, though her strength was already failing, she was well enough to join the deputation of English pilgrims, who, on January 10, were presented to the Pope by the Duke of Norfolk. In describing the scene, the last public ceremony in which she took part, she writes: 'A serene happiness, almost joy, filled my whole being as I found myself on my knees before the Vicar of Christ. My wish was to kiss his foot, but it was withdrawn, and his hand given to me. You may think with what fervour I kissed the ring. In the meantime he had been told my age and my late conversion. His hands were laid on my shoulders, and, again and again, his right hand in blessing on my head, whilst he spoke to me of Paradise.'

Having thus achieved her heart's desire, it seemed as if the last tie which bound the aged convert to earth was broken. A few days later she was attacked by bronchitis, and, after a short illness, passed away in

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her sleep on January 30, 1888, having nearly completed her eighty-ninth year. To the last, we are told, Mary Howitt's sympathy was as warm, her intelligence as keen as in the full vigour of life, while her rare physical strength and pliant temper preserved her in unabated enjoyment of existence to the verge of ninety. Although many of her books were out of print at the time of her death, it was said that if every copy had been destroyed, most of her ballads and minor poems could have been collected from the memories of her admirers, who had them—very literally—by heart.

William and Mary Howitt, it may be observed in conclusion, though not leaders, were brave soldiers in the army of workers for humanity, and if now they seem likely to share the common lot of the rank and file—oblivion—it must be remembered that they were among those favoured of the gods who are crowned with gratitude, love, and admiration by their contemporaries. To them, asleep in their Roman grave, the neglect of posterity brings no more pain than the homage of modern critics brings triumph to the slighted poet who shares their last resting-place.









Johnson offered £300 for the book, while Phillips had only offered £200 down, and £50 on the publication of the second and third editions respectively. The latter, however, was unable to make up his mind to lose the treasure, and after much hesitation and many heart-burnings, he finally wrote to Miss Owenson:—

‘DEAR BEWITCHING AND DELUDING SYREN,—Not being able to part from you, I have promised your noble and magnanimous friend, Atkinson [who was conducting the negotiations], the £300. . . . It will be long before I forgive you! At least not till I have got back the £300 and another £100 along with it.’ Then follows a passage which proves that the literary market, in those days at any rate, was not overstocked: ‘If you know any poor bard—a real one, no pretender—I will give him a guinea a page for his rhymes in the *Monthly Magazine*. I will also give for prose communications at the rate of six guineas a sheet.’

*The Wild Irish Girl*, whose title was suggested by Peter Pindar, made a hit, more especially in Ireland, and the author woke to find herself famous. She became known to all her friends as ‘Glorvina,’ the name of the heroine, while the Glorvina ornament, a golden bodkin, and the Glorvina mantle became fashionable in Dublin. The book was bitterly attacked, probably by Croker, in the *Freeman’s Journal*, but the best bit of criticism upon it is contained in a letter from Mr. Edgeworth to Miss Owenson. ‘Maria,’ he says, ‘who reads as well as she writes, has entertained us with several passages from *The Wild Irish Girl*, which I thought superior to any parts of the book I had read. Upon looking over her shoulder, I found she had omitted

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some superfluous epithets. Dared she have done this you had been by? I think she would; because your good sense and good taste would have been instantly her defenders.' It must be admitted that all Lady Morgan's works would have gained by the like treatment.

In an article called 'My First Rout,' which appears in *The Book of the Boudoir* (published in 1829), Lady Morgan describes a party at Lady Cork's, where she was lionised by her hostess, the other guests having been invited to meet the Wild Irish Girl. The celebrities present were brought up and introduced to Miss Owenso with a running comment from Lady Cork, which, though it must be taken with a grain of salt, is worth transcribing:—

'Lord Erskine, this is the Wild Irish Girl you were so anxious to meet. I assure you she talks quite as well as she writes. Now, my dear, do tell Lord Erskine some of those Irish stories you told us at Lord Charleville's. Mrs. Abington says you would make a famous actress; she does indeed. This is the Duchess of St. Albans—she has your *Wild Irish Girl* by heart. Where is Sheridan? Oh, here he is; what, you know each other already? *Tant mieux*. Mr. Lewis, do come forward—this is Monk Lewis, of whom you have heard so much—but you must not read his works, they are very naughty. . . . You know Mr. Gell; he calls you the Irish Corinne. Your friend, Mr. Moore, will be here by-and-by. Do see, somebody, if Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble are come yet. Now pray tell us the scene at the Irish baronet's in the Rebellion that you told to the ladies of Llangollen and then give us your blue-stocking dinner at Sir Richard Phillips'; and describe the Irish priests.'

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At supper Sydney was placed between Lord Erskine and Lord Carysfort, and was just beginning to feel at her ease when Mr. Kemble was announced. Mr. Kemble, it soon became apparent, had been dining, and had paid too much attention to the claret. Sitting down opposite Miss Owenson, he fixed her with an intense and glassy stare. Unfortunately, her hair, which she wore in the fashionable curly ‘crop,’ aroused his curiosity. Stretching unsteadily across the table, he suddenly, to quote her own words, ‘struck his claws into my locks, and addressing me in his deepest tones, asked, “Little girl, where did you buy your wig?”’ Lord Erskine hastily came to the rescue, but Kemble, rendered peevish by his interference, took a volume of *The Wild Irish Girl* out of his pocket, and after reading aloud one of the most high-flown passages, asked, ‘Little girl, why did you write such nonsense, and where did you get all those hard words?’ Sydney delighted the company by blurting out the truth: ‘Sir, I wrote as well as I could, and I got the hard words out of Johnson’s Dictionary.’ That Kemble spoke the truth in his cups may be proved by the following sentence, which is a fair sample of the general style of the book: ‘With a character tintured with the brightest colouring of romantic eccentricity [a father is describing his son, the hero], but marked by indelible traces of innate rectitude, and ennobled by the purest principles of native generosity, the proudest sense of inviolable honour, I beheld him rush eagerly on life, enamoured of its seeming good, incredulous of its latent evils, till, fatally entangled in the spells of the latter, he fell an early victim to their successful allurements.’

*The Wild Irish Girl* was followed by *Patriotic Sketches*

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and a volume of poems, for which Sir Richard Phillips offered £100 before he read them. A little later, in 1807, an operetta called *The First Attempt, or the Whim of the Moment*, the libretto by Miss Owenson and the music by T. Cooke, was performed at the Dublin Theatre. The Duke of Bedford, then Lord-Lieutenant, attended in state, the Duchess wore a Glorvina bodkin, and the entertainment was also patronised by the officers of the garrison and all the liberal members of the Irish bar. The little piece, in which Mr. Owenson acted an Irish character, was played for several nights, and brought its author the handsome sum of £400. This, however, seems to have been Sydney's first and last attempt at dramatic composition.

The family fortunes had improved somewhat at this time, for Olivia, who had gone out as a governess, became engaged to Dr., afterwards Sir Arthur Clarke, a plain, elderly little gentleman, who, however, made her an excellent husband. Having a good house and a comfortable income, he was able to offer a home to Mr. Owenson and to the faithful Molly. For the present, Sydney, though always on excellent terms with her brother-in-law, preferred her independence. She established herself in lodgings in Dublin, and made the most of the position that her works had won for her. Her flirtations and indiscretions provided the town with plenty of occasion for scandal, and there is a tradition that one strictly proper old lady, on being asked to chaperon Miss Owenson to the Castle, replied that when Miss Owenson wore more petticoats and less paint she would be happy to do so. Yet another tradition has been handed down to the effect that Miss Owenson appeared at one of the Viceregal balls in a dress, the bodice of

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that was dear to both their hearts. Lady Caroline Lamb took a violent fancy to Lady Morgan, to whom she confided her Byronic love-troubles, while Lady Cork, who still maintained a salon, did not neglect her old *protégée*. The rough notes kept by Lady Morgan of her social adventures are not usually of much interest or importance, as she had little faculty or inclination for Boswellising, but the following entry is worth quoting:—

‘Lady Cork said to me this morning when I called Miss — a nice person, “Don’t say nice, child, ’tis a bad word.” Once I said to Dr. Johnson, “Sir, that is a very nice person.” “A *nice* person,” he replied; “what does that mean? Elegant is now the fashionable term, but it will go out, and I see this stupid *nice* is to succeed to it. What does nice mean? Look in my Dictionary; you will see it means correct, precise.”’

At Lydia White’s famous *soirées* Lady Morgan met Sydney Smith, Washington Irving, Hallam, Miss Jane Porter, Anacreon Moore, and many other literary celebrities. Her own rooms were thronged with a band of young Italian revolutionaries, whose country had grown too hot to hold them, and who talked of erecting a statue to the liberty-loving Irishwoman when Italy should be free. Dublin naturally seemed rather dull after all the excitement and delights of a London season, but Lady Morgan, though she loved to grumble at her native city, had not yet thought of turning absentee herself. Her popularity with her countrymen (those of her own way of thinking) had suffered no diminution, and her national celebrity was proved by the following verse from a ballad which was sung in the Dublin streets:—

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‘Och, Dublin’s city, there’s no doubtin’,  
Bates every city on the say;  
’Tis there you’ll hear O’Connell spoutin’,  
And Lady Morgan making tay;  
For ’tis the capital of the finest nation,  
Wid charmin’ peasantry on a fruitful sod,  
Fightin’ like divils for conciliation,  
An’ hatin’ each other for the love of God.’

Our heroine was hard at work at this time upon the last of her Irish novels, *The O’Briens and the O’Flaherties*, which was published early in 1827, and for the copyright of which Colburn paid her £1350. It was the most popular of all her works, especially with her own country-folk, and is distinguished by her favourite blend of politics, melodrama, local colour, and rough satire on the ruling classes. The reviews as usual accused her of blasphemy and indecency, and so severe was the criticism in the *Literary Gazette*, then edited by Jerdan, that Colburn was stirred up to found a new literary weekly of his own, and, in conjunction with James Silk Buckingham, started the *Athenæum*. Jerdan had asserted in the course of his review that ‘In all our reading we never met with a description which tended so thoroughly to lower the female character. . . . Mrs. Behn and Mrs. Centlivre might be more unguarded; but the gauze veil cannot hide the deformities, and Lady Morgan’s taste has not been of efficient power to filter into cleanliness the original pollution of her infected fountain.’ Lady Morgan observes in her diary that she has a right to be judged by her peers, and threatens to summon a jury of matrons to say if they can detect one line in her pages that would tend to make any honest man her foe.

There were other disadvantages attendant upon celebrity



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He advertised in his own periodicals 'LADY MORGAN AT HALF-PRICE,' and stated publicly that in consequence of the losses he had sustained by her former works, he had declined her new book, and that copies of all her publications might be had at half-price. In consequence of these and other machinations, the new *France*, which was at least as good a book as the old one, fell flat, and the unfortunate publishers were only able to make one payment of £500. They tried to get their contract cancelled in court, and Colburn, who was called as a witness, admitted that he had done his best to injure Lady Morgan's literary reputation. Eventually, the matter was compromised, Saunders and Otley being allowed to publish Lady Morgan's next book, *Dramatic Scenes and Sketches*, as some compensation for their loss; but of this, too, they failed to make a success.

The reviews of *France* were few and slighting, the wickedest and most amusing being by Theodore Hook. He quotes with glee the author's complacent record that she was compared to Molière by the Parisians, and that she had seen in a 'poetry-book' the following lines:—

'Slendal (*sic*), Morgan, Schlegel—ne vous effrayez pas—  
Muses ! ce sont des noms fameux dans nos climats.'

'Her ladyship,' continues Theodore, 'went to dine with one of those spectacle and sealing-wax barons, Rothschild, at Paris; where never was such a dinner, "no catsup and walnut pickle, but a mayonese fried in ice, like Ninon's description of Seveigne's (*sic*) heart," and to all this fine show she was led out by Rothschild himself. After the soup she took an opportunity of praising the cook, of whom she had heard much. "Eh bien," says

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Rothschild, laughing, as well he might, "he on his side has also relished your works, and here is a proof of it." "I really blush," says Miladi, "like Sterne's accusing spirit, as I give in the fact—but—he pointed to a column of the most ingenious confectionery architecture, on which my name was inscribed in spun sugar." There was a thing—Lady Morgan in spun sugar! And what does the reader think her ladyship did? She shall tell in her own dear words. "All I could do under my triumphant emotion I did. I begged to be introduced to the celebrated and flattering artist." It is a fact—to the cook; and another fact, which only shows that the Hebrew baron is a Jew *d'esprit*, is that after coffee, the cook actually came up, and was presented to her. "He," says her ladyship, "was a well-bred gentleman, perfectly free from pedantry, and when we had mutually complimented each other on our respective works, he bowed himself out."

In spite of her egoism and her many absurdities, it seems clear from contemporary evidence that in London, where she usually appeared during the season, Lady Morgan had a following. The names of most of the literary celebrities of the day appear amid the disjointed jottings of her diary. We hear of 'that egregious coxcomb D'Israeli, outraging the privilege a young man has of being absurd'; and Sydney Smith 'so natural, so *bon enfant*, so little of a wit *titré*'; and Mrs. Bulwer-Lytton, handsome, insolent, and unamiable; and Allan Cunningham, 'immense fun'; and Thomas Hood, 'a grave-looking personage, the picture of ill-health'; and her old critical enemy, Lord Jeffrey, with whom Lady Morgan started a violent flirtation. 'When he comes to Ireland,' she writes, 'we are to go to Donnybrook

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deserting Ireland, after receiving a pension for patriotism, and writing against the evils of Absenteeism, Lady Morgan was subjected to a good deal of sarcasm by her countrymen. But, as she pointed out, her property in Ireland was personal, not real, the tenant-farm of a drawing-room balcony, on which annual crops of mignonne were raised for home consumption, being the only territorial possession that she had ever enjoyed.

Lady Morgan's eyesight must have temporarily improved with her change of dwelling, for in 1839 the first part of her last work of any importance, *Woman and her Master*, was published by Colburn, to whom she had at last become reconciled. This book, which was never finished, was designed to prove, among other things, that in spite of the subordination in which women have been kept, and in spite of all the artificial difficulties that have been put in their way, not only have they never been conquered in spirit, but that they have always been the depositaries of the vital and leading ideas of the time. The book is more soberly written than most of Lady Morgan's works, but it would probably be regarded by the modern reader as dull and superficial. It was generally believed that Sir Charles had assisted in its composition, and few men have ever wielded a heavier pen. The pair only issued one more joint work, *The Book Without a Name*, which appeared in 1842, and consisted chiefly of articles and sketches that had already been published in the magazines.

The Morgans now found their chief occupation and amusement in the society which they attracted to their cheerful little house. One or two sketches of the pair, as they appeared in their later days, have been left by contemporaries. Chorley, an intimate friend, observes

